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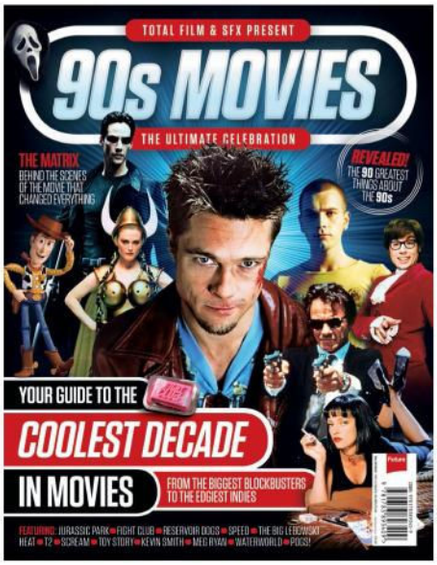
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WELCOME

There's never been a decade cooler than the '90s. Need proof? Which other decade can boast the counter-culture fury of *Fight Club* and *Trainspotting*? The VFX evolution of *Jurassic Park* and *The Matrix*? Or the horror revolution of *Scream* and *The Blair Witch Project*? It was the decade that gave us cinema's most exciting indie filmmakers, from Kevin Smith to Quentin Tarantino. It was John Woo and his ballet of violence, Patrick Swayze riding the waves and Arnie demanding "your clothes, your boots and your motorcycle". It was the decade that saw the last hurrah for the guaranteed bums-on-seats movie star. It was monumental.

Over the next 146 pages you'll find a treasure trove of '90s nostalgia, from oral histories of *Speed* and *Notting Hill* to retrospectives on *Reservoir Dogs* and *Independence Day*, as well as Ewan McGregor spilling the beans on *Trainspotting 2* and telling us what he really thinks about the *Star Wars* prequels. There's also a brain-teasing '90s quiz, and the definitive rundown of the 90 greatest things about the '90s, including *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Britpop and bullet time. So pop the red pill and let us show you just how deep the rabbit hole goes.



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CHECK OUT OUR QUIZ ON PAGE 146

THE 90 GREATEST THINGS ABOUT THE → 90s

It was the decade that brought us Jurassic Park, Goosebumps and turkey twizzlers, and they didn't even make the list. Take a stroll down memory lane with 90 highlights from the coolest decade in movies and beyond...

WORDS ROSIE FLETCHER AND JORDAN FARLEY

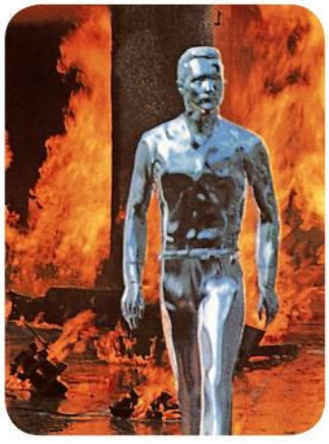


01 EVERYTHING I DO (I DO IT FOR YOU)

Bryan Adam's raspy love ballad topped the UK singles chart for a record-breaking 16 weeks in 1991 and cemented the image of Kevin Costner with a mullet shooting a flaming arrow, and Christian Slater doing a horrendous British accent, in the public consciousness forever.

02 BLOCKBUSTERS REBORN

If the '70s was the decade that invented the blockbuster, the '90s marked phase two as vastly improved CGI brought dinosaurs to life, showed us the sinking of the Titanic and gave us a cyborg who could melt in front of our eyes.





03 FRIENDS

Everybody watched it, everybody wanted to live it, the life and loves of six New York pals who share apartments and hang out in a coffee shop was aspirational, warm and funny (while also being very white middle class). The cast were surely the most famous people alive by the end of the '90s – the show even had its own spin off haircut, "the Rachel".



04 THE RISE AND FALL OF BATMAN

In 1989 Tim Burton reinvented the caped crusader giving him a dark new gothic lease of life. In 1992 *Batman Returns* pushed him up to new pinnacles of cool. Then in 1995 Joel Schumacher took over, added Robin (*Batman Forever*) and Bat Girl (*Batman & Robin* – 1997) – and, holy franchise destroyer!, the Dark Knight was ruined.

05 THE DARLING BUDS OF MAY

This was actually a thing. The chronicles of the Larkin family on a farm in Kent in the '50s largely involved David Jason saying 'perfick!', Philip Franks off *Countdown* being charmingly bumbling and Pam Ferris cooking something. Launched the career of Catherine Zeta-Jones.

06 THE CRYSTAL MAZE

Is it a physical, a mental, a skill or a mystery? Are you in the Aztec zone, the Medieval zone, the Futuristic zone or the Industrial zone? (Or, post series four, the Oceanic). The coolest show on TV was hosted by Riff Raff off *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and involved grown-ups in jumpsuits.

07 BRIT POP

The heyday of the Brit indie and the rise of band such as The Stone Roses, Pulp, The Verve, Happy Mondays, The Charlatans and Primal Scream. Most significantly there was the media 'war' between Blur and Oasis culminating in September 1995 when the first singles from both band's new albums were released on the same day. Blur won the battle, and, let's face it, the war as well.



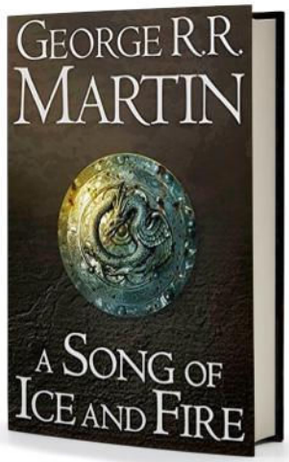
08 DANNY BOYLE

The director of *Steve Jobs*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *28 Days Later* is pretty much a national treasure now, but he made his name in the '90s with the knockout one-two punch of *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*, the latter transforming British cinema. A thoroughly lovely bloke he is too.



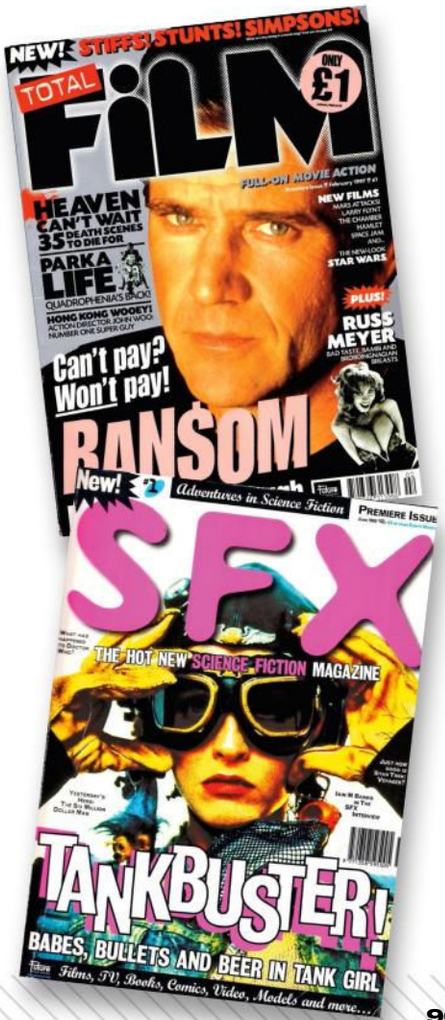
09 A GAME OF THRONES IS PUBLISHED (1996)

OK, so in 1996 *GoT* wasn't quite the dragon-shaped behemoth it is now, but George RR Martin's first novel in the *A Song Of Ice And Fire* series did manage to scoop up an armful of awards and nominations on its original publication. The show didn't premiere until 2011 – the book reached number 1 on the *New York Times* Bestsellers list the same year.



10 TOTAL FILM AND SFX LAUNCHED

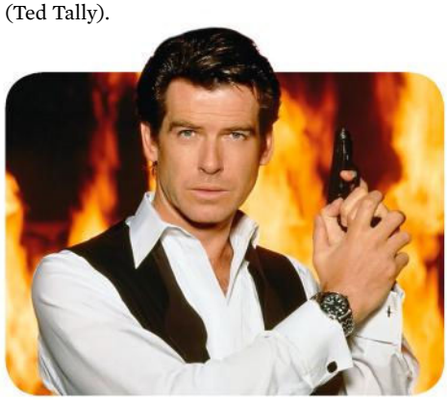
The '90s was the heyday of the magazine era and the birthplace of two of the best! *Total Film* launched in February '97, with Mel Gibson's big face on the cover, while *SFX* sprang forth two years earlier sporting an anarchic Tank Girl as its cover star. We're pleased to report both are still going strong.





11 THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

The Exorcist was nominated in 1973 (and didn't win) but 1991 marked the first (and only) year where a proper horror movie won the Best Picture Oscar. In fact *Silence* gobbled up the 'big five', bagging best actor (Anthony Hopkins), actress (Jodie Foster), director (Jonathan Demme) and writer (Ted Tally).



12 THE RETURN OF BOND

After *Licence To Kill* nearly put a bullet in the brain of the franchise, Bond was relaunched in 1995 with a new face (Pierce Brosnan), new attitude (Bond is a sexist dinosaur) and a new... actually pretty much everything else was the same. *Goldeneye* was cracking, but Brosnan's Bond saw out the decade with a stinker in *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

13 NOKIA 3210

With mobile phone technology finally micro enough to be housed in a case smaller than a house brick, the '90s saw mobile ownership explode. The definitive phone of the era? The Nokia 3210, with its interchangeable faceplates, earwormy ringtone and Snake – a game so addictive that it's seared into our muscle memory.

14 THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

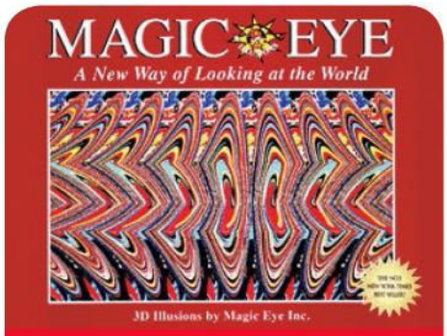
Established by John Major in 1994, considered by some as a 'stealth tax' (28% of the money goes to government-allotted 'good causes'), a chunk of it nonetheless is given to the BFI to help fund film production in the UK. Movies like *Pride*, *Mr Turner* and *Frank* have benefitted from this more recently so the legacy continues. →

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15 VALLEY GIRLS AND CLUELESS

Don't consider *Clueless* one of the best thing about the '90s? As if! Though the ditzy, upper-middle class, largely LA-based valley girl movement rose to prominence in the '80s, it wasn't until Amy Heckerling's coming of age comedy that Cher-speak infected the rest of the planet. We're Audi.



16 MAGIC EYE

Stare at a bunch of coloured spots and patterns for long enough and it turns into a 3D-ish picture of something you didn't want to look at a picture of! This was all the rage for a time, prompting high streets to be filled with folk standing zombie-like trying to 'relax their eyes'.

17 KEVIN SMITH AND THE INDIE AUTEURS

The '90s was the decade where seemingly anyone with a camcorder and some mates could make a movie. Of course, it helped that Kevin Smith, Richard Linklater, Steven Soderbergh, Quentin Tarantino and their ilk were all supremely talented, and had a platform to show off their work to the world in the Sundance Film Festival, frequently leading to much-publicised bidding wars.



18 THE MACARENA

Los Del Rio's aggressively unforgettable dance song was the '90s' quintessential one-hit wonder, and is all-but guaranteed to be wheeled out at any wedding to this day. Los Del Rio's other stroke of genius? The music video introduced a dance so simple even your gran could pull it off.





19 RISE OF THE GAMING CONSOLE

People had been videogaming at home since the arrival of Atari's *Pong* and the ZX Spectrum. But it was in the 1990s that it became a phenomenon, thanks in no small part to the launch of the PlayStation and 3D gaming franchises like *Tomb Raider*. Along the way we had the SNES, N64, Mega Drive, Game Boy and more...



20 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

Joss Whedon's wisecracking scripts balanced snark, world-saving and profound insight into life as a high schooler, while Sarah Michelle Gellar solved riddles, fought monsters and loved vampires. And still everyone thought Willow was cooler...



21 MEG RYAN

Alongside Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan was the queen of the '90s rom-com, a pair of collaborations with Tom Hanks and Nora Ephron (*Sleepless In Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*) earning her the reputation of America's sweetheart. Just forget *Joe Versus The Volcano*.

22 YOU WANT THE TRUTH? YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!

Penned by Aaron Sorkin (he of *The West Wing*) and delivered with barking bravado by Jack Nicholson's Colonel Jessup, *A Few Good Men*'s iconic line captured the zeitgeist, earning Nicholson an Oscar nomination. It was voted the 29th greatest film quote by the American Film Institute and is consistently spoofed to this day.





23 DAWSON'S CREEK

Kevin Williamson's teen drama about a glam group of friends living in a fictional Massachusetts town was one of the key contributors to the craze for teen-themed TV shows. James Van Der Beek's Dawson was nominally the lead, but Pacey was many lasses' favourite.

24 MIKE MYERS

The Canadian funnyman shot to fame stateside on sketch show *Saturday Night Live*, but it was rock comedy *Wayne's World* and spy spoof *Austin Powers* that saw him rocket to global comedy superstardom. Along with Jim Carrey the funny bones of the planet had a lot to thank Canada for, eh?



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25 NEW LABOUR

After 18 years of Conservative government in Britain, the nation was ready for change. In 1997, a year which also saw the death of Princess Diana, Tony Blair and chums swept to power and knocked the Tories off their perch. The rebranded Labour Party promised a new form of left-wing politics which embraced market economics.



26 WILL SMITH, THE FRESH PRINCE

In the last decade where star-power could be relied upon to open a movie, it came no brighter than Will Smith's. The actor spent the first half of the '90s on the small screen, as the Fresh Prince, but made the leap to the cinema with blockbuster hits like *Independence Day* and *Men In Black*.

27 THE SPICE GIRLS

Forget boy-powered Britpop, the musical movement that really defined the '90s was Girl Power. Leading the charge were The Spice Girls, the five-strong pop group it was impossible to escape after their debut single, 'Wannabe', became a global phenomenon. They're the best-selling female group of all time, by some considerable distance, and even got their own movie.

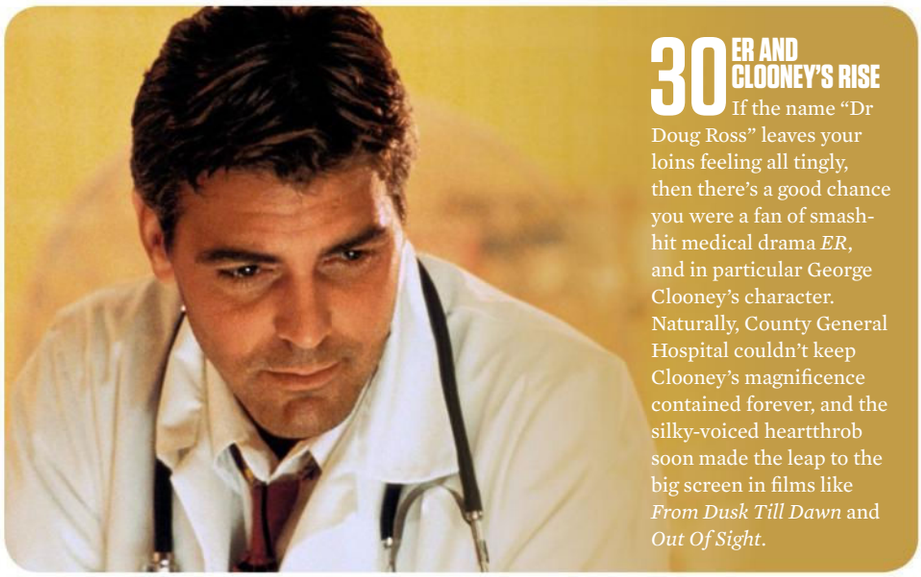


28 ALCOPOPS

Because in the '90s alcohol was no longer exciting. Unless it was a "premixed alcoholic beverage" that turned your tongue blue and tasted of mixed fruit (that's mixed in a laboratory – not in a kitchen).

29 SUNNY DELIGHT

The neon drink that allegedly turned your skin orange was finally launched in the UK in 1998, with a £10 million marketing campaign that ensured every child was nagging their parents to put it on the shopping list. Despite being marketed as a healthy alternative to soft drinks, it contained just 5% fruit juice and a series of controversies caused sales to half in three years.



30 ER AND CLOONEY'S RISE

If the name "Dr Doug Ross" leaves your loins feeling all tingly, then there's a good chance you were a fan of smash-hit medical drama *ER*, and in particular George Clooney's character. Naturally, County General Hospital couldn't keep Clooney's magnificence contained forever, and the silky-voiced heartthrob soon made the leap to the big screen in films like *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Out Of Sight*.



31 GRUNGE

While British rock bands were busy fannying around with cheery pop ditties, Seattle-based guitar groups such as Nirvana, Soundgarden and Pearl Jam made alternative rock music seem effortlessly cool. Blending heavy metal and punk, the "Seattle sound" was revolutionary, but diminished in popularity after the suicide of Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain.

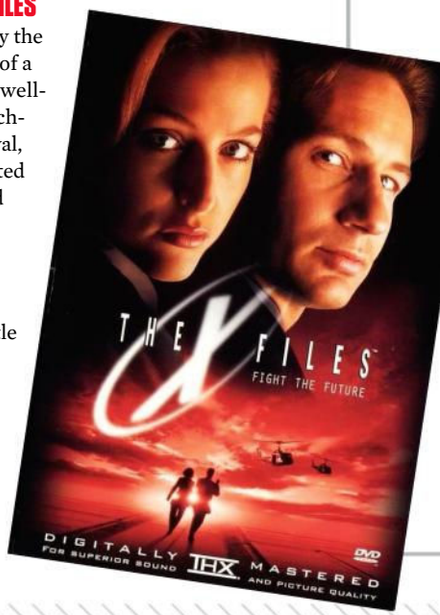


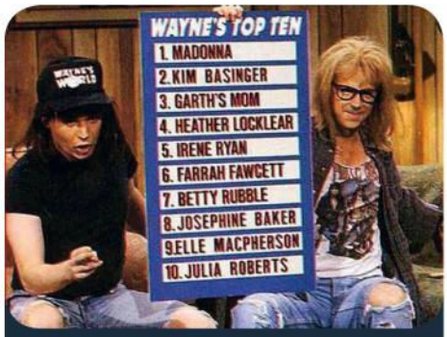
32 EDWARD FURLONG'S 'CURTAINS' HAIRDO

The defining 'do of the '90s was, of course, the curtains. Edward Furlong's John Connor cut kickstarted the craze for centre-parted manes which David Beckham, Leo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Aaron Carter, Johnny Depp and many, many more thought wise at the time for some reason.

33 THE X-FILES

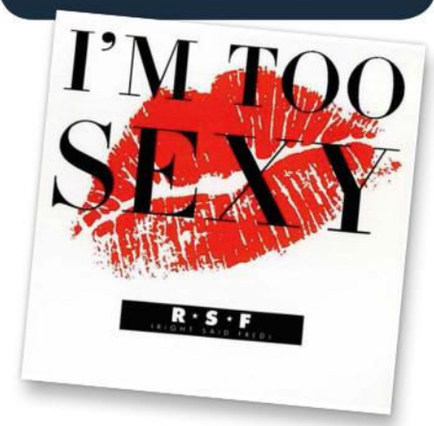
Recently the subject of a not-particularly-well-received but much-anticipated revival, *The X-Files* boasted the perfect blend of supernatural weirdness, will-they-won't-they frisson between its leads and a title sequence that haunted your dreams. It got so big, in fact, a movie spin-off was made in 1998.





34 WAYNE'S TOP TEN

Mike Myers' other gift to the '90s was Wayne's Top Ten, a simple top 10 (or five) list that would typically run down "females with whom Wayne would like to have sexual intercourse". Naturally, Madonna came out top. Schwing!



35 "I'M TOO SEXY"

You may not have appreciated it at the time, but when you hear it now it's stuck in your head for at least an hour. Right Said Fred's antics would never fly today.



36 GAULTIER'S COSTUMES IN THE FIFTH ELEMENT

The Fifth Element was arguably the most visually striking film of the '90s, thanks in no small part to famed fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier's costumes. Gaultier designed over 1,000 full outfits in all, 900 for the Fhloston Paradise scenes alone, and would meticulously check each one every morning. Unbelievably, he wasn't even nominated for an Oscar. Shows what they know.

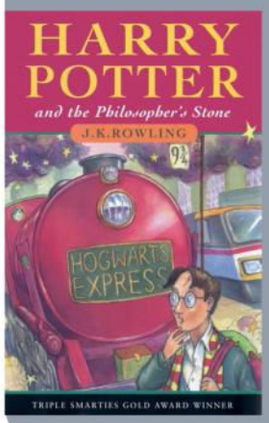
37 POKÉMON

The handheld videogame about Japanese teens battling teams of pocket-sized monsters exploded in the '90s and could quickly be found on television (a cartoon), cinema screens (a movie) and in the playground (trading cards). Plus, nothing was cuter than Pikachu.



38 HARRY POTTER NOVELS

The films didn't start till 2001, but the first three books in JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series were already a bona fide phenomenon by the end of the '90s, having spent 79 consecutive weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. The Scottish writer received a not-too-shabby $105,000 for the US publishing rights at the time, an unprecedented amount for an unknown author.



39 DVDs

Before DVD became mainstream in the mid-'90s people were living in the VHS dark ages – rewind buttons, pan and scan, those little tabs you had to break off so no one could record over your advert-filled copy of *Die Hard*... Gawd bless those shiny discs. It wasn't the smoothest start, with several films coming on "flippers" that you had to turn over halfway through, but it quickly became the defacto medium for home cinema enthusiasts.





40 THE BIG BREAKFAST

The cheeky Channel 4 morning show hosted variously by Chris Evans, Gabby Roslin, Johnny Vaughan, Denise Van Outen (and more) was a breath of fresh air (and presumably cooked tomatoes) for morning telly, and injected a shot of *The Word*'s anarchic irreverence into an otherwise sleepy timeslot.



41 DISNEY ANIMATION RESURGENCE

By the '90s it seemed like Disney's glory days were behind them, until the knockout trio of *Beauty And The Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King* put them back on the animated map. Robin Williams' scene-stealing performance as Aladdin's genie was also responsible for the craze of casting famous faces in vocal roles.



42 JULIA ROBERTS

From *Pretty Woman* to *Runaway Bride*, no actress dominated '90s cinema like Julia Roberts. She may have started and ended the decade with rom-coms, but Roberts wasn't afraid to expand her horizons, starring in legal thrillers (*The Pelican Brief*), family fantasies (*Hook*) and historical epics (*Michael Collins*).

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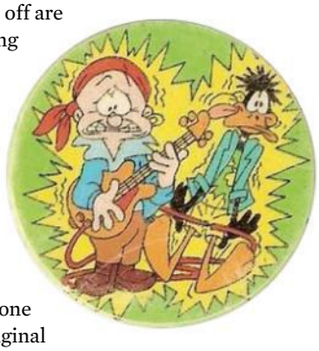


43 TOMB RAIDER

Lara Croft was gaming's first female icon. An archaeologist and adventurer (think Indiana Jones, but in hot pants), she could typically be found in some ancient cave pushing rocks or shooting T-Rexes. Even better, you could make her do a handstand! It was only natural that Angelina Jolie would go on to play her in the movie.

44 POGS/TAZOS

These collectable cardboard discs were all the rage on the playground, so much so that they were banned by many schools. The aim of the game was simple: stack your opponent's discs, slam a larger plastic disc into the top of them and any you knock off are yours. Featuring better-known properties (*Star Wars*, Looney Tunes, Batman), Tazos were the more popular of the two, but everyone knows that original is best.



45 BUDWEISER WASSUP! ADVERT

Commercials don't come more inspired (or infectiously imitable) than this Budweiser ad where four friends say hello to each other and, well, not much else actually. Intensely annoying when done by others, but supremely satisfying to let rip with yourself, it's arguably the most seen, not to mention the most parodied, advert of all time.

46 THE WORD

Channel 4's highly influential, late night, counter-cultural magazine show was infamous for going to places other shows daren't – usually something involving French-kissing pensioners or baths full of maggots.



47 MY SO-CALLED LIFE

Claire Danes' coming-of-age drama may have only lasted a single, 19-episode season, but it ranks among the best shows of the '90s. Unafraid to tackle hard-hitting social issues (child abuse, homophobia, homelessness) it was nominally the story of Angela Chase – a high schooler who fancied floppy-haired pretty boy Jordan Catalano, played by Jared Leto.



48 RICHARD CURTIS

"I'm just a man standing in front of a list asking it to love him." Alright Richard, jeez, you can be in the top 90 already. Curtis had already conquered TV (*Mr Bean*, *The Vicar Of Dibley*) by the time he made the leap to the big screen. World-conquering rom-coms *Four Weddings And A Funeral* and *Notting Hill* simply confirmed him as the decade's most influential writer.



49 THE MILLENNIUM BUG 'Y2K'

Also known as a massive overtime bonus for all company IT guys who agreed to work for triple pay on NYE to combat an issue that didn't even require turning machines off and turning them on again.

50 LIVE AND KICKING AND SM:TV

Saturday morning TV arguably reached its peak in the '90s with the Beeb's *Live And Kicking* and ITV's Ant and Dec-fronted rival *SM:tv Live*. Both were magazine shows featuring celebrity guests (including Hollywood stars), phone-ins, games, comedy sketches and cartoons, but *SM:tv* won the war because *Pokémon* > *Rugrats*.





51 FREAKS AND GEEKS

Ghostbusters director Paul Feig made his name with this superb high school TV comedy, debuting in 1999, featuring future famous folk James Franco, Seth Rogen and Jason Segel. The cult favourite is a nightmare to get hold of over here because of pesky music rights.

52 THE RISE OF HOTMAIL

We take it for granted now. But in the 1990s the idea of a free webmail service that you could access from anywhere BLEW PEOPLE'S MINDS. A couple of companies had a crack at it, but when Microsoft acquired the HoTMaiL tech (see, the name contains HTML) for $400 million in 1997 the standard was set.





53 LEONARDO DICAPRIO

He may have just won his first Oscar for *The Revenant*, but there's no question that Leo fever was at its peak in the '90s thanks to the double whammy of *Romeo + Juliet* and a little indie movie called *Titanic*. Better yet, see where it all began with 1991's *Critters 3*. If you fancy a good laugh, that is.

54 STAR WARS IS BACK

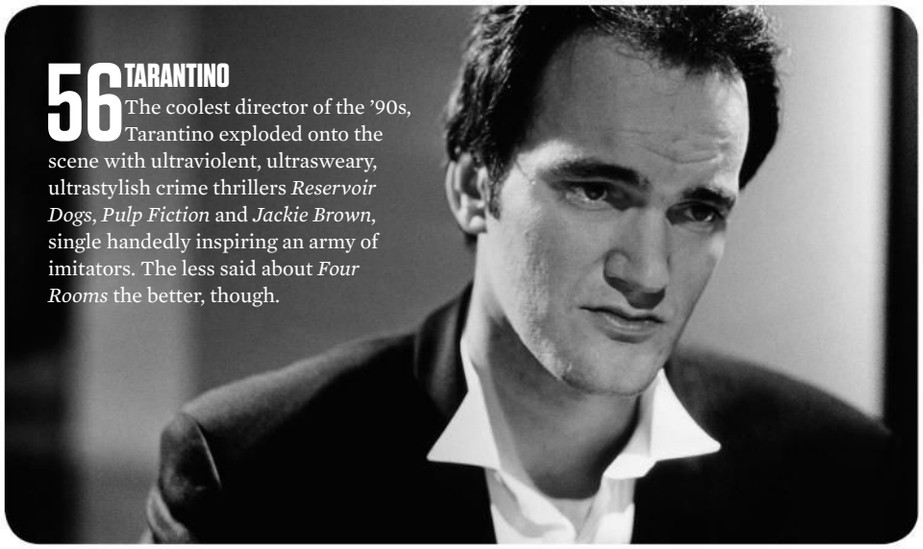
And you thought *Star Wars* was ubiquitous in the run-up to *The Force Awakens*. That was nothing compared to the fever-levels reached in 1999 before the release of *The Phantom Menace*. With hindsight it seems silly, but at the time there was nothing on the planet more exciting than *that* trailer and *that* teaser poster. How else do you explain Jar Jar Binks toys selling out?





55 MARKY MARK

Hard to believe, but the frowny-faced artist now known as Mark Wahlberg was once the (usually shirtless) frontman for hip-hop group Marky Mark And The Funky Bunch. Their song "Good Vibrations" made it to number one in the States, but their second album sunk, causing the band to split in 1993.



56 TARANTINO

The coolest director of the '90s, Tarantino exploded onto the scene with ultraviolent, ultrasweary, ultrastylish crime thrillers *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Jackie Brown*, single handedly inspiring an army of imitators. The less said about *Four Rooms* the better, though.

57 THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

There was a time when you had to get on a plane or a boat to visit Calais for some cheap plonk. A romantic weekend in Paris took months of planning. But then in 1994 Britain was reconnected to the Continent after 12,000 years of separation.

58 BEANIE BABIES

If mere mention of these bean-filled cuddly toys causes you to break out in a sweat it's probably because you spent weeks/months/years trawling shops to find a Peace Bear with a mint tag only to discover you had to buy 10 normal beanie bears for the chance to buy it. Probably worth a packet now though.



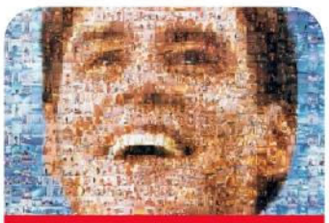
59 HUGH GRANT

Loveable fusspot Hugh Grant was the epitome of gentlemanly British actors in the '90s. He'd been around since the '80s, but it wasn't until *Four Weddings And A Funeral* that Grant became a household name.

60 SCARY KIDS' TV – EERIE INDIANA, ROUND THE TWIST

The '90s was the decade when kids TV got so messed up it's a wonder there isn't an entire generation of deranged lunatics running around, babbling about super intelligent canines and haunted lighthouses. If anything, *Round The Twist*'s slightly cheap effects just made everything creepier.





61 BIG BROTHER AND THE TRUMAN SHOW

The '90s was when surveillance culture for the sake of entertainment was no longer the domain of dystopian fiction. It may not have debuted in the UK till 2000, but the *Big Brother* format was created in '97, just a year before satire *The Truman Show* was released.

62 OJ SIMPSON

The People of the State of California v. Orenthal James Simpson was a huge event – front page news for the best part of a year, with every aspect of the murder case forensically analysed in and out of court. Recently returned to the headlines thanks to ace drama series *American Crime Story*.



IMAGES © MOVIESTORE, BFI, ANTHONY CUTAJAR/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK, ALLSTAR, GETTY, WIKIPEDIA



63 SUPER SOAKER

These glorified water pistols had been on sale for a while, but they weren't officially called Super Soakers until 1991. Unfathomably exciting in principle, but unless you had the cheddar to splash out for a fancy deluxe model they'd propel the wet stuff at staggeringly naff speeds and require a considerable amount of pumping.



64 '90s EROTICA

The '90s was the decade when cinema got sexy with a series of steamy thrillers that were pure trash, but entertaining nonetheless. Sharon Stone, the unconditional queen of the genre, starred in two of 'em: *Basic Instinct* and *Sliver*.



65 TWIN PEAKS

The owls are not what they seem, and neither was David Lynch's surreal soap opera *Twin Peaks*. The show's central mystery – who killed Laura Palmer – drew people in, but it was the batshit characters and bonkers supernatural elements that kept people hooked... until Laura's killer was revealed and people stopped watching. Oh.

66 HYPE WILLIAMS

You may not recognise the name, but Hype (unsurprisingly, not his real name – it's Harold) was the director of the most influential hip-hop music videos of the '90s, including Will Smith's "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It" and TLC's "No Scrubs". The man is a goddamn American treasure.



67 SUPERMODELS

Including the birth of the phrase "I don't get out of bed for less than $10,000" and "Yes I would love to be in a George Michael video".



68 TITANIC – "DRAW ME LIKE ONE OF YOUR FRENCH GIRLS"

James Cameron's romantic disaster wasn't just a movie, it was a cultural event. The story of star-crossed lovers aboard the doomed ship's maiden voyage cleaned up at the Oscars and earned a mint at the box office, eventually going on to top $2 billion. Naturally it was spoofed everywhere, most famously on French and Saunders.





69 BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY

Helen Fielding's 1996 novel about a single woman who wears large underwear might not have been adapted for the big screen until 2001, but it was a hit in its literary form, winning British Book Of The Year in 1998. Look out for another cinematic sequel later this year.



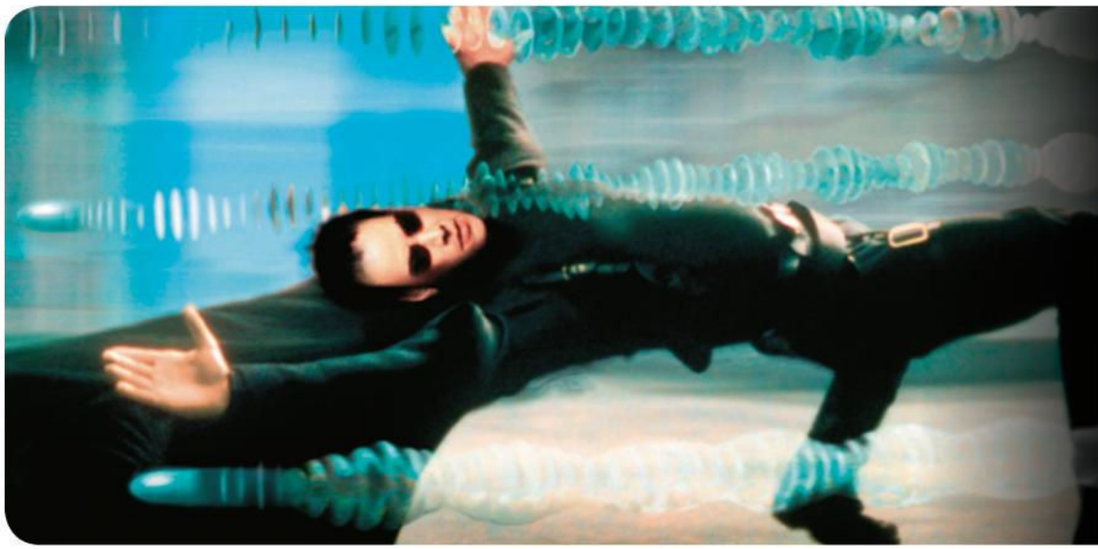
70 "I SEE DEAD PEOPLE"

Believe it or not, there was once a time when M Night Shyamalan was the most exciting filmmaker on the planet. This was thanks in no small part to his frighteningly effective horror movie *The Sixth Sense*, which established the Shyamalan template for MIND-BLOWING twist endings. Except that one where the aliens are allergic to water. That was just silly.



71 CGI ANIMATION

It may be the norm now, but back in 1995 CGI animation, in particular *Toy Story*, was revolutionary. It helped that Pixar were at the height of their storytelling powers straight out of the gate, of course, but there was no underestimating the dazzle of those still-impressive visuals.



72 BULLET TIME

The coolest special effect from the coolest film of the decade, bullet time offered hope in the same summer that gave us CG abomination Jar Jar Binks. The technique, which used a series of still cameras arranged in a circle to give a hyper-detailed, moving slow-mo image of a character, was such a good trick because it also served an important story purpose – giving us an insight into what it was like to be The One.



73 TOM HANKS

After a successful run of comedy movies in the '80s, the '90s was when America's greatest living actor Tom Hanks made the move into dramatic roles. He smashed it, of course, winning back-to-back Oscars for *Philadelphia* and *Forrest Gump*. He even directed his first film in 1996, the underrated musical drama *That Thing You Do!*.

74 WINDOWS 95

The operating system that made PCs accessible for people who weren't fluent in computer speak, Windows 95 had a simple to navigate interface and could run on pretty much anything with a monitor and a processor. When Microsoft tried to get rid of the start button with Windows 8 people went *mental*.



75 TAMAGOTCHI

Thousands of parents got relief from caring for their children by giving them an LCD creature to feed and nurture – until the little tinkers got bored and demanded a Game Boy Color instead.

76 CHANNEL 5

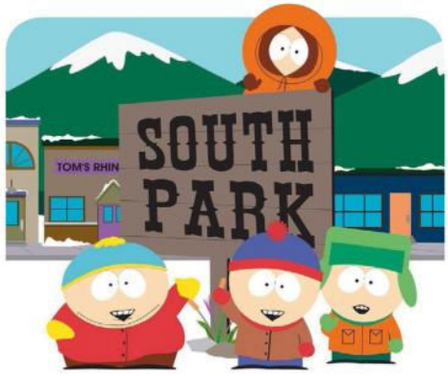
There was once a time when free-to-air telly was limited to a paltry four channels. The launch of Channel 5 in 1997 changed all that – now there were five! Only it was mostly filled with old comedy and tawdry erotica. So still only four worth watching, then.

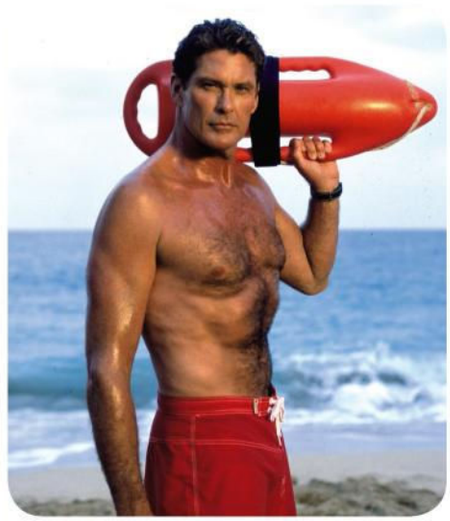
77 KEANU REEVES

Go and find a picture of '90s Keanu; alternatively find a recent picture of the immortal star of *John Wick 2* taken yesterday. It will be exactly the same.

78 SOUTH PARK

Trey Parker and Matt Stone's crudely animated, bitingly satirical and massively controversial animation about four boys and the often disgusting things they get up to in their quiet little mountain town is still going strong. Gave rise to many catchphrases you'd be sent to detention for saying.





79 BAYWATCH

This action drama series starring The Hoff was *supposedly* about people saving lives but the only reason people tuned in was to see Pamela Anderson in a bikini. FACT.



80 RICHARD LINKLATER

The eclectic indie filmmaker made a big impression in 1991 with *Slacker* which, despite being seemingly plotless, inspired a whole load of other indie filmmakers to try their hand at making movies. *Dazed & Confused* and romantic masterpiece *Before Sunrise* soon followed.

IMAGES © REX/SHUTTERSTOCK, ALLSTAR, GETTY



81 NELSON MANDELA RELEASED FROM JAIL (1990) THEN BECOMES PRESIDENT (1994)

No politician had a greater positive impact on their country in the '90s than Nelson Mandela. Released from prison in 1990, after 27 years behind bars, he was part of talks to abolish apartheid and establish multiracial elections that led to him becoming South Africa's first black president. Not too shabby.



82 TELETUBBIES

Despite supposedly being for children, these bulbous, multicoloured, antenna-headed demons haunted the nightmares of every child in the '90s. Probably because they kept a baby trapped in the sun. The monsters.

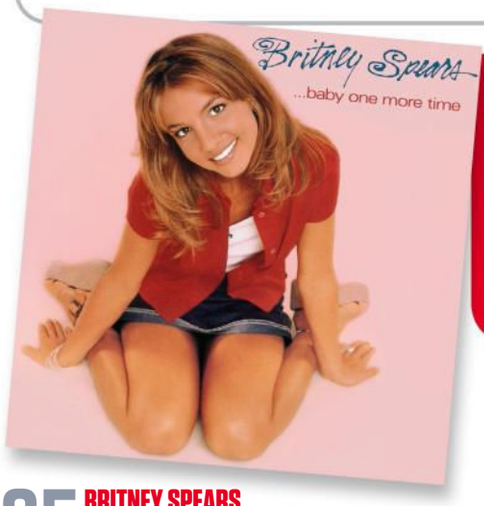
83 CHRISTINA RICCI

As Wednesday Addams and *Casper*'s Kat Harvey, Christina Ricci cornered the market on creepy child performances in the '90s. The actress moved into more adult roles in the later '90s, including *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* and acclaimed indie *Buffalo '66*, but she was always a teeny bit creepy.



84 TEA STOPS JUST BEING TEA FLAVOURED

Back in the '80s tea came in two flavours: milky and strong. A few years later it was everything from liquorice to cinnamon. Who says the simpler times weren't better?



85 BRITNEY SPEARS

The princess of pop may have only released one album in the '90s – 1999's *...Baby One More Time* – but that's more than enough for her to make this list of greatest moments. Songs don't get any more massive than the title track, and the high-school set music video set hearts aflutter across the globe.



86 '90s ARNIE

Before he became The Governator Arnie was an action icon, starring in some of the best explodey movies of the '90s including *Total Recall*, *Terminator 2* and *True Lies*. Just don't mention *Batman & Robin*. Or *Jingle All The Way*. Or *End Of Days*. Or...

87 CARGO PANTS

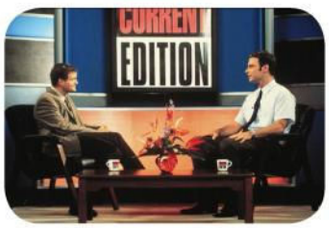
There aren't enough pockets in your jeans. In the 1990s, though, you had somewhere to stick your copy of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, because your "combats" or "cargos" had fat pockets up each leg.

88 BEVERLY HILLS, 90210

Do you miss 30-year-old teenagers who drive cars to school and have complicated relationship issues based on peer-popularity and having perfect teeth? Maybe you *should* be looking for this on Digital Versatile Disc then. Fox's drama series about moneyed teens ran the entire length of the decade.

89 META HORROR

In the '80s *Nightmare On Elm Street* proved that slasher horrors could also have a sense of humour (and be wildly inventive). Director Wes Craven reinvented horror again in the '90s with the help of writer Kevin Williamson. *Scream*'s meta narrative played with horror conventions in a thrilling way, and inspired countless imitators.





90 HULK HOGAN IN MR NANNY

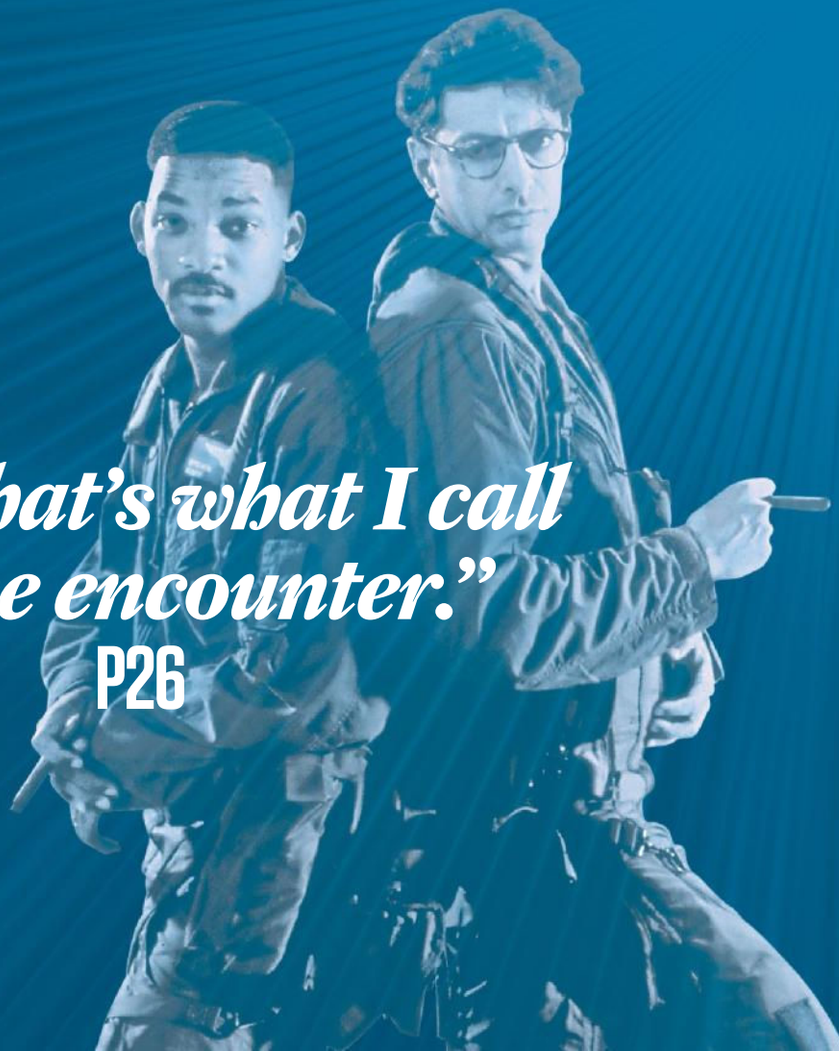
A popular trend in the '90s was for extremely muscley men to star in silly comedies where the only joke was that all those muscles were completely pointless. Arnie did it with *Kindergarten Cop*, and Hulk Hogan had a crack at it with *Mr Nanny*, in which an ex-wrestler acts as bodyguard for two kids. Terry Gene Bollea's reputation has taken a few hits recently but we all laughed back then.

SCI-FI & FANTASY



"If the Pirates Of The Caribbean breaks down, the pirates don't eat the tourists!"

P18



"Now that's what I call a close encounter."

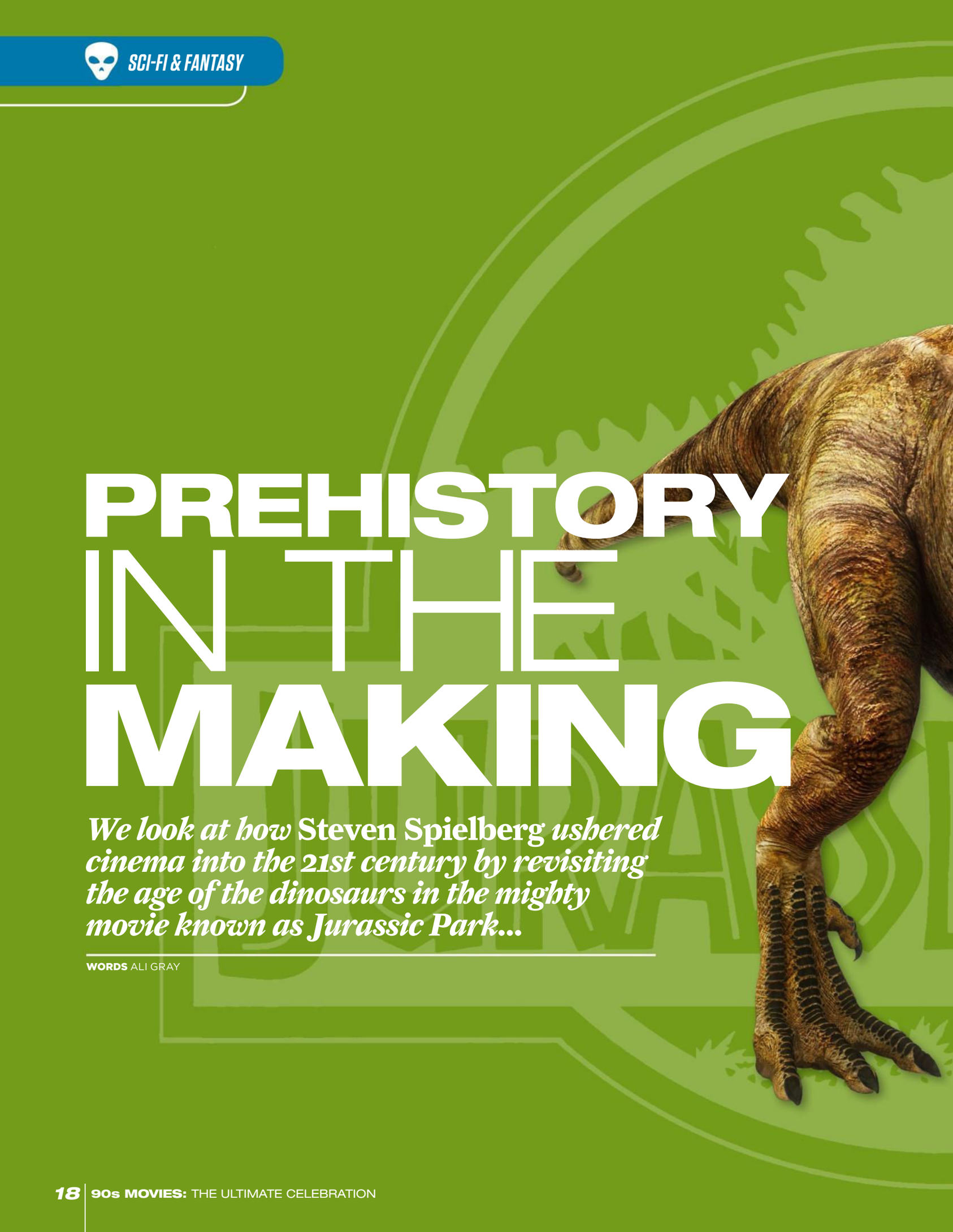
P26


"These are the rules: everybody fights, nobody quits."
P30
"You have to let it all go, Neo. Fear, doubt and disbelief. Free your mind."
P50
"I need your clothes, your boots, and your motorcycle."
P38

PREHISTORY IN THE MAKING

We look at how **Steven Spielberg** *ushered cinema into the 21st century by revisiting the age of the dinosaurs in the mighty movie known as Jurassic Park...*

WORDS ALI GRAY







Jeff Goldblum, Richard Attenborough, Laura Dern and Sam Neill get egg-cited in *Jurassic Park*.

October, 1989. Having just embarked on his last crusade with Indiana Jones, Steven Spielberg was hungry for new ideas. He'd set up a meeting with Michael Crichton to work on a screenplay for a medical drama which would later become *ER*. Before they'd even began discussing it, out of politeness, the director asked his author friend, "So... what's new in the world of books?" Crichton responded casually, "Oh, I'm writing this thing about dinosaurs and DNA." Spielberg's eyes widened. He wanted to hear more. A dinosaur lover from an early age, Spielberg had always been fascinated by Earth's mighty prehistoric inhabitants – suddenly, doctors and nurses didn't seem so important. Eventually, after being pressed for more and more information, Crichton gave up the whole story. Spielberg sat in silence, cogs whirring. He had already begun storyboarding *Jurassic Park* in his head.

A bestselling book and a box-office blockbuster, *Jurassic Park* remains one of the most spectacular stories of the recent age. On the surface, it appears to have much in common with its titular theme park – a rollercoaster ride full of thrills, spills and truly unforgettable experiences. At its heart though, Crichton's story taps into a deep-seated fear of man's fractured relationship with science, and the boundaries that lie therein. Fittingly, in order to bring *Jurassic Park* to life, Spielberg would have to push a few boundaries himself.

Creating dinosaurs for the big screen had proved frightfully difficult in the past, and unless you were willing to use jerky stop-motion miniatures or dress a guy up in a rubber suit, your options were limited. Spielberg's initial plan to resurrect the residents of *Jurassic Park* was to work with Bob Gurr, who created the giant inflatable animatronic King Kong at Universal Studios, but the idea was dismissed as too expensive ("I initially wanted all the dinosaurs to be full-sized," said Spielberg, "but that was just my wishful thinking"). Eventually, Spielberg brought together four figureheads from the world of special effects: practical effects guru Stan Winston; stop-motion supremo Phil Tippett; ILM visual effects expert Dennis Muren; and special effects supervisor Michael Lantieri. His mission was simple: "I want people to say, 'Gee, this is the first time I've ever seen a dinosaur!'"

The reality was not so simple. While Stan Winston's impressive animatronics were just the ticket for close-ups – most memorably the



Who isn't a cute ickle baby dino? The T-Rex, that's who!



Who's a cute ickle baby dino? He is!



The terrifyingly intelligent, highly dangerous velociraptors from the original film.

infamous shot used in the trailer, in which the T-Rex eyes up two tasty morsels through the window of their Jeep – full-length shots of the dinos were proving more problematic. The idea was to use Tippett's pioneering Go-Motion technique – as used on AT-ATs and Tauntauns in *The Empire Strikes Back* – to animate the creatures, adding a 'motion blur' between each frame to eliminate the jerkiness. But it wasn't perfect. Animation tests were passable, but when the shots were composited with humans, they lacked the realism the story so desperately required to instil a sense of danger. It was about the time Spielberg started pulling the brim of his cap low over his furrowed brow that Dennis Muren piped up: "Would you ever consider letting us do the full-sized dinosaurs from head to toe on the computer?" Prove it, said the director. And prove it he did.

Nowadays, the idea of a realistic, fully computer-generated character isn't that much of a stretch, but back in the early '90s – when CG was still in its infancy and computers had roughly the same processing power as your average iPhone app – it was still considered a risk. ILM hadn't got much further than the water tendril in *The Abyss* and the T-1000 in *Terminator 2*. Not yet a CG convert, Spielberg had images of "Nintendo-style dinosaurs" cheapening his movie, but Muren and his team showed the director exactly how far digital animation had come – and what massive potential it had. "There we were, watching the future unfolding on the TV screen, so authentic I couldn't believe my eyes," remembers Spielberg. "I turned to Phil [*Tippett*], and he said to me: 'I think I'm extinct.'" Keen to retain his expertise on dinosaur movement and behaviour, Spielberg combined Tippett's team with Muren's ILM squad and decided to forge ahead with CGsauruses. Later, Tippett would hear palaeontologist Alan Grant utter almost his exact same exasperated phrase in the movie.

> "A DINOSAUR LOVER FROM AN EARLY AGE, STEVEN SPIELBERG HAD ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY EARTH'S MIGHTY PREHISTORIC INHABITANTS"

PARK LIFE

With his pixellated prehistoric performers roaming the render farm while they waited for their screen debut, Spielberg set about rounding up *Jurassic Park*'s human element. Sam Neill was to play protagonist and sceptic Alan Grant, after William Hurt turned the role down, while Laura Dern signed on to play fellow dino-digger Ellie Sattler. Richard Attenborough would bring gravitas to the role of billionaire park owner John Hammond, while Jeff Goldblum brought the funny as chaos theorist Ian Malcolm. Interestingly, Hammond and Malcolm came to represent not only opposite ends of the moral barometer (one dressed in white, one clad in black), but also Steven Spielberg and Michael Crichton respectively – one man the fantasist and dreamweaver, the other the realist and the nagging voice of reason. It was an irresistible clash of ideals on every level. "I didn't cast movie icons or stars," said Spielberg. "I tried to cast really, really good actors."

Three weeks of shooting on the Hawaiian island of Kauai commenced in August 1992. The decision to digitally add in CG dinosaurs in →

IMAGES © ALLSTAR



Dr Alan Grant with Lex (Ariana Richards) and Tim (Joseph Mazello).

post-production actually gave the practical effects teams *more* work to do – every element of the scene that a computer-generated character touched (or, more accurately, stamped on/headbutted/destroyed) had to react in a way that computers couldn't always render realistically. Filming in such a tropical environment did cause a few headaches for Spielberg and his crew, not least when the final days of shooting were rudely interrupted by Hurricane Iniki ("It was like a bad movie," recalls the director. "I turned on CNN and instantly there was a map of Hawaii on the TV, with an icon for a hurricane pointing directly at our island"). Weather led to further issues, particularly when artificial rain played havoc with Stan Winston's incredibly complex – and unfathomably expensive – T-Rex robotics. Crew members would blast the Rex's head with hairdryers before a scene, but rain stopped play more than once – even history's deadliest predator gets the sniffles occasionally.



When T-Rexes attack: the scene that shook a million cinemas.

Nonetheless, it was an eye-opening experience to see the work of Spielberg and his crew come to fruition in the daily rushes. Said Stan Winston of the T-Rex: "It was wonderful to see this 9,000lb, 40-foot long wonder, getting in there and *acting*." Spielberg had a naturalistic approach to fleshing out his dinosaurs, using various combinations of animal sounds to voice his creations. The T-Rex's blood-curdling roar was actually a cocktail of elephant, tiger and alligator sounds, together with the gush of a whale's blow hole. Spielberg himself provided vocals for the movie's Velociraptors during their first, unseen appearance – his throaty roars were filtered through a megaphone and mixed with hissing geese and screaming dolphins among other things.

Yet despite the countless experts, talented crew members and advisors on set, one simple effect eluded Spielberg and his team. Earlier in production, the director had been listening to Earth, Wind & Fire in his car when he noticed the stereo's bass was making his rear view mirror vibrate. His subsequent brainstorm – having a glass of water ripple in concentric

You don't want to let one of these bad boys indoors...

"CREW MEMBERS WOULD BLAST THE T-REX'S HEAD WITH HAIRDRYERS BEFORE A SCENE, BUT RAIN STOPPED PLAY MORE THAN ONCE"

circles from the thundering footsteps of the impending T-Rex – foxed even his best effects men, who worked tirelessly to replicate the effect to no avail. Defeated, supervisor Michael Lantieri – having called sound engineers, wave tank generators and audio experts – went home and picked up his guitar, before noticing it was giving out exactly the right kind of vibrations. The next day, a guitar string was threaded through the Jeep's dashboard and the T-Rex finally had the memorable entrance he so deserved.

The more of *Jurassic Park* he shot and the more ILM footage he saw, Spielberg quickly realised it was the T-Rex, not any of his human characters, who was the star of the show. The planned ending was insufficient – a smaller-scale affair with Grant and friends cornered by the raptors that terrorised them throughout the complex. Consulting his effects team, and with Michael Crichton's blessing, Spielberg changed the movie's climax to accommodate one last hurrah for the T-Rex – the villain inadvertently turned hero. It proved to be a masterstroke. Roaring triumphantly in victory while draped in a banner reading 'When Dinosaurs Ruled The Earth', it was the last of many indelible images that cemented *Jurassic Park* as a landmark movie of modern cinema. Few shots gave more goosebumps – audiences would react in a big way.

Released to a chorus of praise on 11 June 1993, *Jurassic Park* was an instant classic. Not only was it a critical success, but it was an astonishing commercial juggernaut to boot, grossing a whopping $914 million worldwide and leaping ahead of Steven Spielberg's own *ET* to become the most successful movie of all →

IMAGES © ALLSTAR



This stampede in *Jurassic Park III* wasn't matched by a stampede to the cinemas...

time. It would retain that position on top of the world until James Cameron raised the special effects bar in 1997 with the sadly dinosaur-free *Titanic*, but by then, *Jurassic Park*'s enduring legacy was already ensured.

WORLD'S APART

If *Jurassic Park* was a motion picture 65 million years in the making, audiences didn't have to wait quite as long for the sequel. Sharing its name with the 1925 movie that inspired his original novel, Crichton wasted no time in writing follow-up *The Lost World*, and Spielberg couldn't resist returning to the director's chair for the adaptation. Ian Malcolm was now promoted to unlikely lead, finding himself smack bang in the middle of 'Site B' – Hammond's breeding ground for the attractions at Isla Nublar. Goldblum did his best to keep the movie's energy up, but by 1997, the thrill of seeing dinosaurs on the big screen had waned. Apart from a tantalising – if highly unlikely – final sequence in which a T-Rex escapes to wreak havoc in downtown San Diego, *The Lost World* didn't manage to capture the same movie magic, bearing the mark of a rushed job hurried to page and screen. Audiences didn't respond as positively either, with the film making some $300 million less than its predecessor.

The franchise wasn't ready to become fossilised just yet, though. Without a Crichton

> **"THE MORE OF JURASSIC PARK HE SHOT AND THE MORE FILM FOOTAGE HE SAW, STEVEN SPIELBERG QUICKLY REALISED IT WAS THE T-REX, NOT ANY OF HIS HUMAN CHARACTERS, WHO WAS THE STAR OF THE SHOW"**



The third movie's pteranodon sequence managed to be genuinely scary.

IMAGES © ALLSTAR



Dr Grant finds himself outnumbered in *Jurassic Park III*.



novel to adapt, Spielberg handed over the directorial reins for *Jurassic Park III* to Joe Johnston (*The Rocketeer*, *Jumanji*) in 2001. Despite the return of Alan Grant and some nifty set-pieces ported from the original book (including a chilling encounter in a pterodactyl aviary) the threequel was a fairly transparent excuse to go through the motions once more. Bigger dinosaurs, like the newly-discovered T-Rex beater Spinosaurus, weren't given the screen-time they needed due to budget cutbacks, and an action-packed ending was given the kibosh due to a lack of funds. The movie started production without a finished script, and it shows.

Both sequels, though inferior, only serve to highlight what an incredible film and a technical masterpiece the original *Jurassic Park* was, and still is. Steven Spielberg agrees: "It was a wonderful collaboration between effects and artistry, science and palaeontology," the director says. "It was everything I wanted it to be: no less, but a lot more." The late, great Stan Winston summed up the movie's jaw-dropping appeal perfectly: "Even though I was so closely involved with it for such a long period of time, I still watch the film and wonder, 'How did we do this?'". 90s

***The Jurassic Park Ultimate Trilogy* is available on Blu-ray.**

HUNGRY EYES

Twenty-two years later, *Jurassic World* brought the dinos back to life – it was a monster smash, currently the fourth highest grossing film of all time. Its director and stars remember the first time they saw the original.



COLIN TREVORROW

"I was 16. I'm a little older than the generation where *Jurassic Park* is their *Star Wars* – *Star Wars* is my *Star Wars*! The difference between 15 and 12 is great, so I had other things filling up my brain; I was already thinking about girls! But as I watched *Jurassic Park*, I was 12 again. I think all adults became 12 for those two hours.



CHRIS PRATT

"I was 13. It's really the first event movie I remember seeing. We're all fascinated with dinosaurs, so when I saw that there was a movie by Steven Spielberg with dinosaurs... I convinced my parents, and they took me, and I ended up seeing it twice on the opening weekend. When the T-Rex came out and its pupils dilated and it did that crazy growl... oh, man."



BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

"I was 11 and I saw it right when it came out – mind-blowing! And almost an emotional experience, to see dinosaurs that were so real. Unbelievable. I'll never forget it, my whole life. On my first day of shooting *Jurassic World* we were flying over an area I recognised from the original film and the soundtrack was playing in my head. It was epic!" **JG**



INDEPENDENCE

It may have redefined the scale of sci-fi cinema for a whole new generation, but 1996's* Independence Day *was initially considered to be a lukewarm box office prospect, as* Calum Waddell *discovers...



DAY

Stop us if you've heard this one before: otherworldly invaders come to Earth and summarily slaughter its inhabitants but thanks to the efforts of some ambitiously resilient Americans, the aggressive aliens are ousted and harmony is, ultimately, restored. Indeed, on paper 1996's blockbuster hit *Independence Day* may as well have been called *War Of The Worlds Part II*. Yet, when the Roland Emmerich-helmed fantasy romp rolled around, the big screen had been decidedly lacking in any super-sized sci-fi shocks. Oh sure, *Independence Day* may not have been anything original in the eyes of the more seasoned genre buff but, given that 1995's biggest hits included *Apollo 13*, *Braveheart* and *Die Hard With A Vengeance* is it any wonder that audiences lined up around the block to see some space-nasties destroy the White House?

Yet, despite going on to be the biggest grossing movie of the year, *Independence Day* was considered to be a very risky investment by its studio, Twentieth Century Fox. So much so, in fact, that the extraterrestrial epic was only given the green light after Emmerich, and writer-producer Dean Devlin, proposed to drastically cut costs.

"We were under severe budget constraints with that movie," begins Douglas Smith, the visual effects wizard who would go on to win an Oscar for his work on *Independence Day* and whose CV includes *Star Wars* (1977), *Lifeforce* (1985) and *True Lies* (1994). "What happened is that Roland promised he could get the film done for a price which didn't frighten away the studio. I think it was about $60 million, which meant that this was not going to be the most expensive feature ever made. Of course, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is, but in comparison to other major summer movies – and considering what needed to be done – it was really not enough. For instance, they were planning to do all of these extensive visual effects but it had to be cost effective."

The question is, then, why Emmerich – then scaling the heights of Hollywood after the success of 1994's *Stargate* – was so willing to instigate *Independence Day* on a less-than-stellar cash flow...

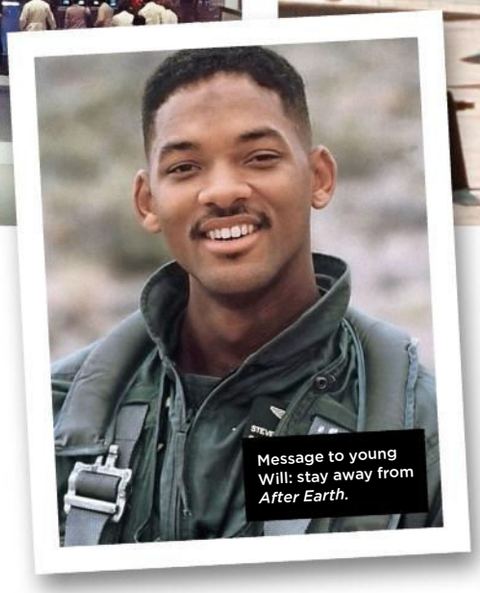
"The answer to that is simple," admits Smith. "Basically, by agreeing to stick to that budget the studio allowed him to have some independence of his own, if you will pardon the pun. So we were moving ahead even though, internally, the numbers were just not working out."

Consequently, Smith found himself diving headfirst into a project which he now considers to be the most challenging of his entire career.

"The movie was a very difficult experience for me," he reflects. "It turned out to be one of the most successful projects that I worked on – right up there with the original *Star Wars* – but it was also one of the most difficult. To give you an →


Building a craft to kick alien butt.


Battle of the planets.


Message to young Will: stay away from *After Earth*.

idea: it was about midway through the shoot when the first visual effect shot got put together and edited. I was sitting there watching it and thinking, 'Oh no, this is just *not* working out.' It was so bad that I was saying to myself, 'I have to show my friends this' [laughs]. It was embarrassing, you know? So I was concerned about whether or not *Independence Day* was going to work as sheer spectacle or not."

Thankfully, Emmerich eventually found a way to find some further support from Fox and some fresh financing soon resulted.

"What happened is that we compiled a showreel," Smith says. "That was what really cemented the confidence of the studio. I am not sure what the final budget tally of the movie was but I don't think they had to spend all that much more. We also screened the showreel to some exhibitors and it was very well received. If I recall, they alluded to *Jurassic Park* and thought this could be just as big. I remember that Roland came back and said there were now huge expectations for the movie. After that it was a case of 'Just shoot and do whatever you need to do to make it work out.' So we made up some new storyboards, and this was only four weeks before the release of the film [laughs]. It was that tight to get everything right. As the guy in the middle of it, it was never clear that this movie was going to come out as well as it did."

Of course, at the box office, where Hollywood pays most of its attention, *Independence Day* came out very well indeed. In its opening American weekend the feature awed enough audiences to seize over $50 million in theatres. Given that the stars of the film were Will Smith (then still a relatively unproven and unfamiliar leading man), Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman and Randy Quaid, it's safe to say that this fiscal phenomenon had more to do with the onscreen special effects – and that ominous poster image of the White House being destroyed – than any particular thespian-appeal.

"That might be true to an extent but there are a lot of special effects movies that cannot sustain themselves emotionally," admits Smith. "However, *Independence Day* manages to do that. You become involved with these characters and you really care about them. But, whatever the reasons were, I was over the moon when people flocked to see it. I got an Oscar out of it too which is nothing to complain about! Sometimes you sweat blood over a film and it fails financially, or it is dreadful and you just do not want it on your resumé, but thankfully that was not the case here."

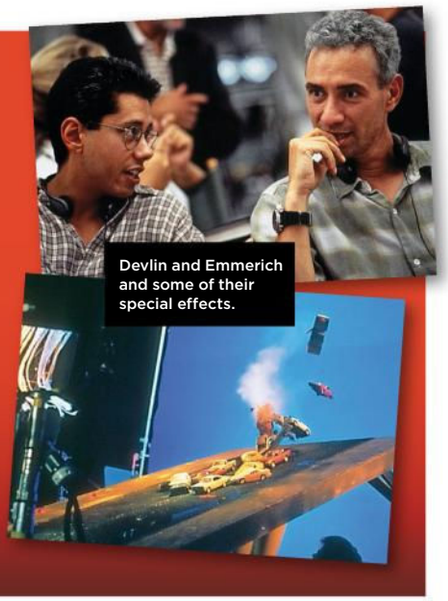
TOP OF THE CHARTS

Yet, despite breaking box-office records (including the largest opening week gross in US cinema history), Smith had little opportunity to enjoy his success.

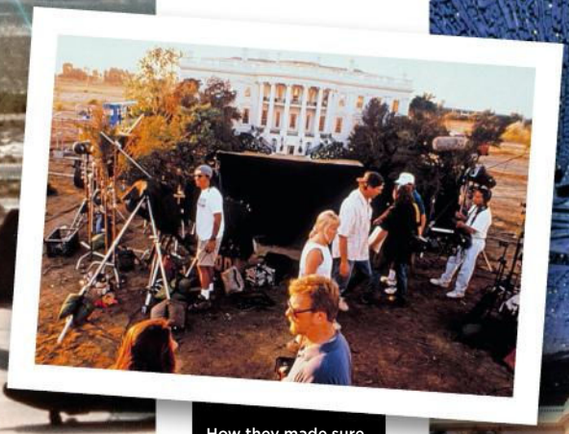
"That film taught me everything when it came to learning about my body's ability to deal with stress," he laughs. "So when it was finally finished I was happy to kick back and relax for a little bit. There was a big buzz about *Independence Day* but it was not until I went to a showing at the end of the opening week that I really had the chance to enjoy what we had created. It was a packed screening with a rowdy college crowd and they were ready for this movie. It was totally wild and whenever something crazy would happen I could not hear myself think for about five minutes afterwards because of the cheers. So it was great to be a part of that. Unfortunately, it was also detrimental to me judging the movie itself [laughs]. When I worked on *Star Wars* someone from ILM came by and let us all know about the box-office

International Treasure

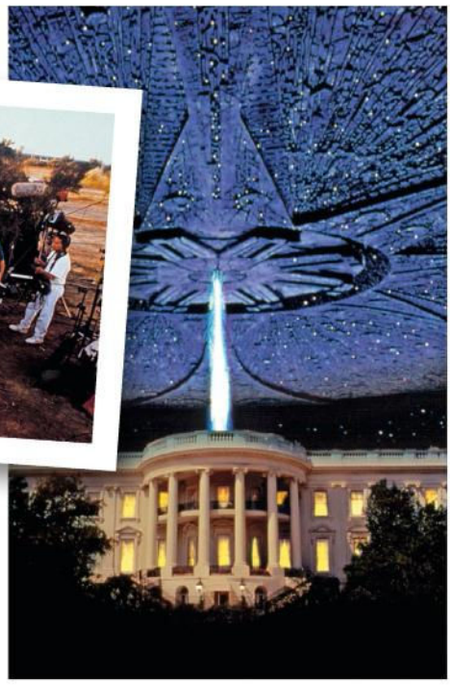
According to Douglas Smith, Emmerich insisted on an international flavour to his visual effects crew – something that added a team atmosphere. "Roland is from Germany, of course, so he wanted to give some people from his own country a break, which I thought was great. The German crew was less experienced but Roland hoped that the combination of this fresh new team – and Hollywood veterans like me – would help really take things up a notch. The German crew was interested in doing some miniature effects stuff – as well as getting experience with digital effects – so it was a mission of discovery for them and we ended up mentoring some of them. I think that it is down to the combined effort of a lot of people that *Independence Day* came out so well."


Devlin and Emmerich and some of their special effects.





How they made sure Bill Clinton didn't fry.



> "I FOUND THE CRITICISM THAT THE MOVIE CAME UNDER REALLY UNFAIR"

records which were being shattered – but with *Independence Day* I just read about it in the paper. I think everyone was just happy to have it done, and out there, in the end."

Unfortunately, the critical reception to *Independence Day* was less than stellar. Sure, several stateside viewers applauded the sight of jingoistic Americans taking the fight to some destructive extraterrestrial terrors, but many reviewers were less than kind. The BBC, for instance, noted the film's closing, feel-good celebration of United States heroism as being "jaw-droppingly pompous" while a critic at the *San Francisco Chronicle* singled out Smith's special effects as one of the few things of merit in what was labelled "derivative" and "cynical".

"I found the criticism that the movie came under, and which it still gets, really unfair," affirms Smith in response. "Roland is a great filmmaker with a clear vision. He had ideas for what every last thing should look like – including that big spaceship – and just look at his casting: he was smart enough to see that Will Smith was going to be the next big thing. I think the movie walks a very thin line between farce and success and the reason it never slips is down to his actors. They really knew how to play *Independence Day*. But above everything else, it's just a very entertaining film. I heard a radio commentator the other day saying that when *Independence Day* came out he was hard on it but – looking back on it now – it's actually a lot of fun. I don't think the same thing can be said about a lot of the other blockbusters from that era. But *Independence Day* is standing the test of time and that is attributable to Dean and Roland and their gift as storytellers."

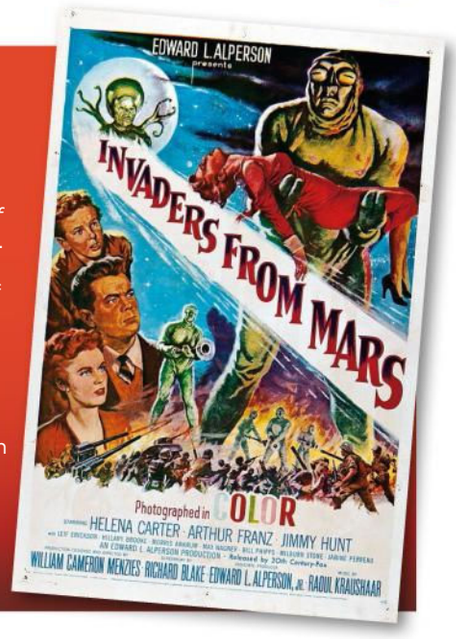
BELATED FOLLOW-UP

Almost two decades later, *Independence Day* is about to spawn a sequel, with Emmerich once again at the helm. "I never wanted to do it, which is always a good beginning, right?" laughed the director at a press conference to announce its title – *Independence Day: Resurgence*. Shot in Albuquerque and reuniting Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman and Vivica A Fox, it's safe to assume he changed his mind.

"This world cannot build alien technology, but we can harvest it," he explains. Set 20 years after the first film, *ID:R* takes place in the wake of the 'War of '96'. "It's a very different world," Emmerich notes. Goldblum, returning as lovable uber-nerd David, adds: "I'm now the director of Earth Space Defence, so it's my job to lead the way in making sure everybody's safe..." Things have also progressed politically. The USA now has a female president, *House*'s Sela Ward ("She's tougher, more decisive, aggressive," she reveals) and Fox's one-time stripper has a new job: "She's moved on to working as a hospital administrator, saving lives." Meanwhile, fresh-faced newbies entering the fray for the first time include Jessie Usher as Dylan Hiller (Will Smith's son; Smith chose to make *Suicide Squad* instead), and Maika Monroe (*It Follows*, *The Guard*) as Patricia Whitmore, the daughter of Bill Pullman's ex-President. The cast wouldn't be complete without Judd Hirsch, returning as David's father – expect a replay of the pair's winning banter in *ID:R*. "If I could get a word in edgeways with Jeff Goldblum on set, it would be lovely to develop a relationship with him," Hirsch jokes. Just beam us up already.

Evil Aliens

Independence Day follows in the wake of a long legacy of interplanetary intruders which includes *The Thing From Another World* (1951), *The War Of The Worlds* (1953) and *Invaders From Mars* (1953). Even with the presence of John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), Tobe Hooper's big-budget rehash of *Invaders From Mars* (1986) and the knowing silliness of cult favourite *Killer Klowns From Outer Space* (1987) the actuality of other-planetary evil had been – pre-*Independence Day* – largely confined to small areas and a minimal cast of actors. After Emmerich introduced the obliteration of Earth on an excessive, awe-inspiring scale, however, the floodgates were opened – as evidenced by the special effects-heavy hokum of Spielberg's 2005 *War Of The Worlds* update and 2011's *Cowboys & Aliens*.



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"We're gonna need a bigger can of insecticide!"

A Bug's Death

STARSHIP TROOPERS | *Tanker topped...*

Paul Verhoeven's controversial sci-fi pits Aryan poster boy Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien) and the mobile infantry against marauding alien arachnids of all shapes and sizes. But their mission to a planet named Tango Urilla adds an explosive new element to the director's trademark sex, violence and satire – fire, and lots of it.



1 An air strike destroys armies of swarming warrior bugs. Rasczak (Michael Ironside), Rico and the Mobile Infantry move in among the corpses.



2 A lone arachnid warrior attacks. Rico, Dizzy (Dina Meyer) and co blow it to twitching pieces. Watkins (Seth Gilliam) finishes the job in a blur of green goo.



3 Rico locates a bug hole, arms a nuclear explosive, and with a cry of "Fire in the hole!" the insect den is neutralised. Corporal Birdie (Ungela Brockman) calls for back-up.



4 As the soldiers surround the remaining bugs, the ground opens and a massive tanker bug appears incinerating the corporal's arm with geysers of fire.



5 Rico jumps on the tanker, and machine guns a hole in its shell. Clinging on for dear life, he hurls a grenade into the fresh cavity and is thrown off the bug into the dust.



6 The tanker explodes. Rico strides off victorious. "I need a corporal," says Rasczak. "You're it until you're dead, or I find someone better..."

Matt Glasby

***Starship Troopers* is available on DVD, Blu-ray and VOD now.**



THE BACKGROUND

Ed Neumeier's (*RoboCop*) original script *Bug Hunt At Outpost Nine* did the rounds for years. When similarities with Robert A. Heinlein's 1959 novel *Starship Troopers* were pointed out, the book was optioned and its plot and character names assimilated. Problem was, Heinlein's work was horribly right-wing. "I stopped after two chapters because it was so boring..." complains Verhoeven. "It is really quite a bad book." Between them, the filmmakers hatched a subversive solution...

THE POLITICS

Verhoeven (who lived through the WWII German occupation of The Netherlands) and Neumeier satirised Heinlein's rampant militarism with mock news reports in the style of Nazi propaganda and Gestapo-esque uniforms. "If I tell the world that a right-wing, fascist way of doing things doesn't work, no one will listen to me," said Verhoeven. "So I'm going to make a perfect fascist world: everyone is beautiful, everything is shiny... But it's only good for killing fucking bugs!"

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS

THE PERFORMANCES
Because the bugs were almost completely CG, the actors really had to earn their money. "It takes a lot of concentration to go, 'OK there's a giant arachnid thing that's 12 feet high and coming at me screeching at 35mph!'" said Jake Busey (Ace Levy). Often Verhoeven himself would stand in for the aliens. Clancy Brown (Sergeant Zim) recalls him "jumping up and down with a bullhorn going, 'I'm a big fucking bug! I'll kill you!'"

THE TANKER
The rubble created as the Tanker bug comes out of the ground was foam, though the bug itself was largely CG. For the fight sequence, Van Dien jumped on top of a shell attached to the back of a tractor. When we see the action in close-up, it's the actor standing on the tractor. When it moves to a wider shot it's a digital tanker bug with a digital Van Dien attached.

THE SFX
The fire-bombing at the beginning of the sequence (created by SFX supervisor John Richardson) was the longest rolling explosion in film history. They weren't allowed to shoot it in Badlands National Park, South Dakota, so they rented an adjacent private farm instead. The field was littered with 'real' bug corpses, but any that moved were created digitally and composited with the live-action footage later. Animatics were used to storyboard the action.

THE ANIMATION
Tippett created *RoboCop*'s ED-209 and *The Empire Strikes Back*'s Tauntauns among others. The aliens were originally going to be animated models, but "after *Jurassic Park*, we generally decided that we could go digital." Following months of research on how insects move, Tippett Studio created 250 full-motion alien shots. When the warrior bugs swarmed through live-action shots, the VFX took 32 hours *per frame* to render. Eventually they streamlined the system so it only took 18.

THE CAST
Verhoeven regular Michael Ironside (Rasczak) had been considered to play RoboCop, and was, ironically, terrified of spiders. Both Mark Wahlberg and James Marsden turned down the role of Johnny Rico before Van Dien signed on. The love quadrangle between Rico, Dizzy, Carmen (Denise Richards) and Zander (Patrick Muldoon) caused controversy. Test audiences reacted so strongly to Carmen's 'betrayal' of Rico that several of her scenes were cut. "People wanted her to die," says Neumeier.

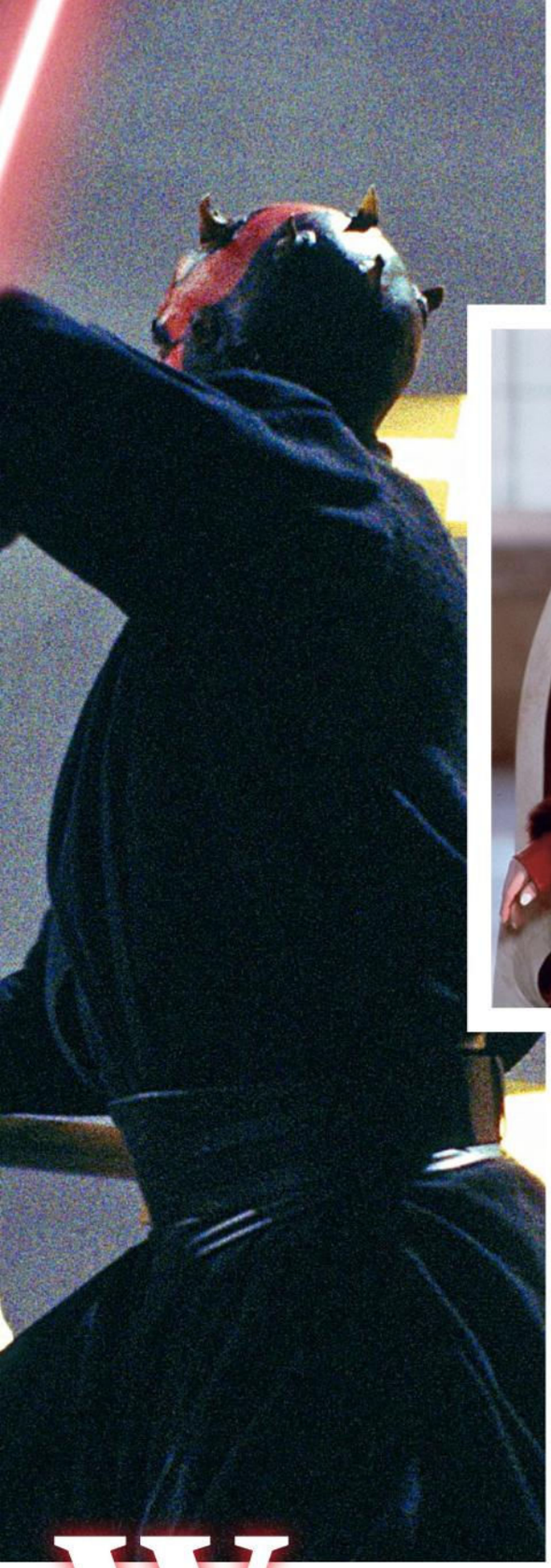
THE BUGS
Tippett Studio's Craig Hayes designed the various alien species. "What we're trying to achieve is a palpable feeling of weight and mass, and a lethal quality," says VFX supervisor/co-producer Phil Tippett. The hierarchy of the bugs echoes Verhoeven and Neumeier's WWII preoccupations, with the arachnid-shaped warrior bugs representing the infantry, the fire-breathing tanker bug standing in for tanks and flying hopper bugs mimicking air support.



STAR WARS: EPISODE I — *The Phantom Menace*

It was the movie event of the '90s... until it wasn't. Back before the Force awakened Total Film talked to those who matter about making the first Star Wars prequel, series memories and meeting Harrison Ford

WORDS YAEL SHUV, ANDREW STEWART, CAM WINSTANLEY, DAN JOLIN, JAMES WHITE





White out: Natalie Portman as Queen Amidala.

When it finally reached screens, it was with not so much a bang as a warning. "Please inform staff if you see anyone attempting to record this film," nervous corporate suits requested impatient audiences at advance showings. It was a demand that George Lucas, creator of the most successful movie trilogy ever, hardly expected to make two decades earlier. Then *Star Wars* opened to a world that didn't know its Jedi from its Jawas; 22 years later and he presided over one of the biggest entertainment empires on the planet, a position he could only consolidate with *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. Right?

Of course, you could crunch the numbers and attempt to dismiss *Episode I*'s unofficial tag as "the most eagerly awaited film ever". The take from its US opening weekend was $9 million less than the $72 million set by *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* two summers before, and has been comprehensively thrashed in the years since, not least of which by *The Force Awakens*, which grossed a staggering $247 million in its opening weekend. Its budget, at under $120 million, may have been big in 1999, but it still lagged behind *Godzilla* and *Waterworld*. None of its stars had waved an Oscar over their heads.

But then, the phenomena of George Lucas' ongoing space opera has always been about more than box office. Fans never queued outside their local cinema for weeks before *Titanic* came out. *Avatar* doesn't have websites devoted to its action figures. And what's big at the box office seldom runs the same when it comes to acting gongs.

For at the end of the day, despite all the CGI dazzle (impressive in its day), endless licensing deals and its infamous legacy, *Episode I* was about Lucas returning to his roots. The first instalment of his space soap saw him scratching around the deserts of Tunisia during the mid '70s, after he was refused permission to remake *Flash Gordon*. He returned there to trace how a blond pre-teen moppet called Anakin Skywalker became the insidious bucket-headed Darth Vader. And don't those palace guards on Naboo look like some of the ones on Mongo?

ON SEEING THE FIRST FILMS

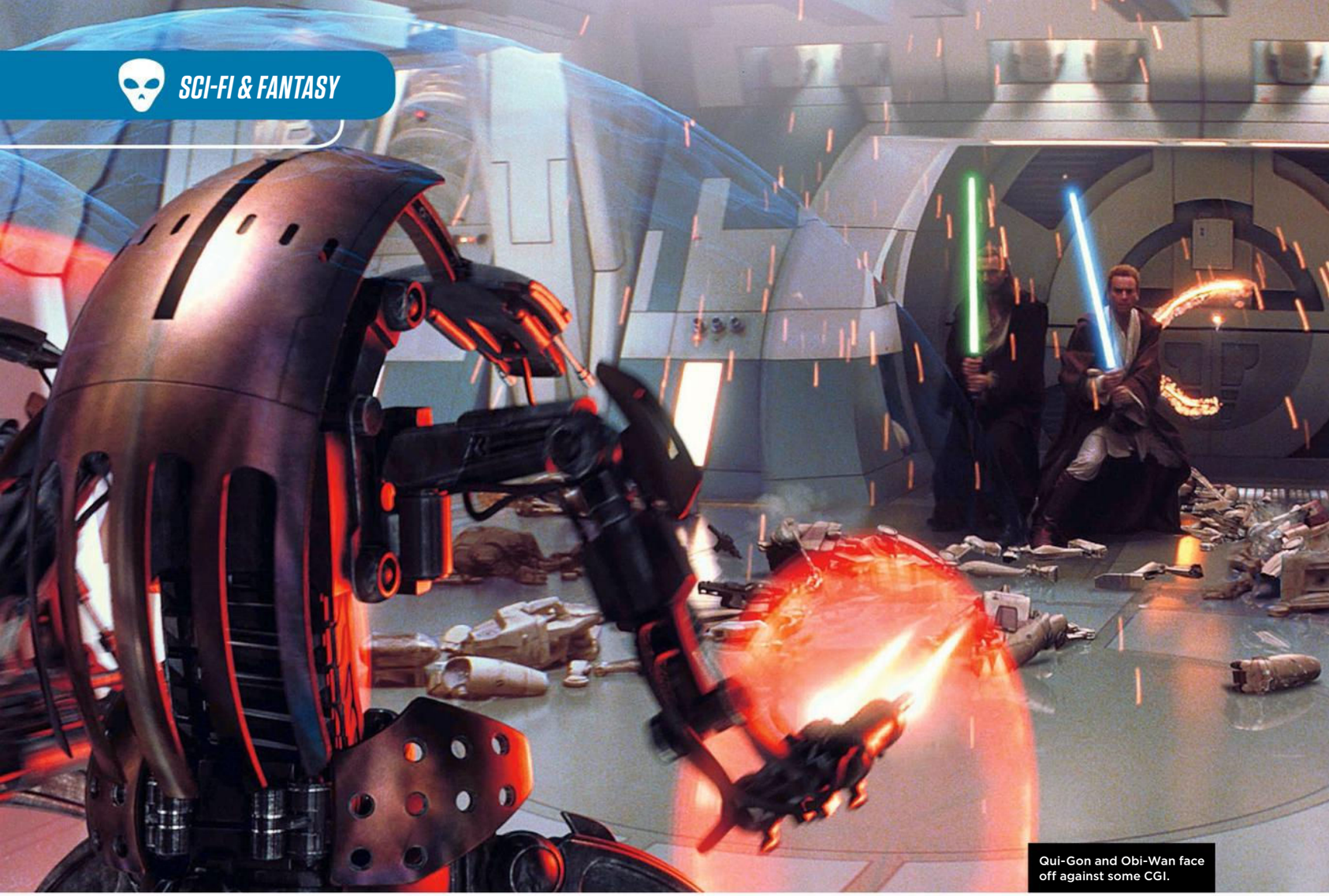
Liam Neeson: The first time I watched *Star Wars*, I thought: "This is a refreshing and really special film that taps into mythology." I wasn't that fond of the other two. For some reason I blotted them out of my psyche, I don't know why. I remember those Ewoks... They didn't quite work, did they?

Ahmed Best: I was three, and it was my first movie ever. I was late, because my father who took me is late all the time. So we walked into *Star Wars* late but I didn't know what it was. And I was transfixed. After the movie I was just hooked; I had the pillow case, the curtains, cloths, everything... I was a huge fan.

ON EPISODE I: THE BEGINNING

George Lucas: This story was actually written 20 years ago and I kept it all pretty much the same. The first film is very similar to *Episode IV* in how it introduces all the characters and sets up what they're going to do. The plot start to thicken until the second film and the payoff is in the third.

Rick McCallum: I was in Prague and George was supervising *Jurassic Park* for Spielberg because he was in Poland shooting *Schindler's List*. We were going to go to Poland to show Steve the effects — the first CG effects on *Jurassic Park* →



Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan face off against some CGI.

"I'D NEVER SEEN A STAR WARS MOVIE BEFORE I MET GEORGE LUCAS"

– that George had overseen. Once George saw that the CG could work, he called me and said: "It's here. We can make the movie". And virtually a week later we started preparing *Episode I*.

Lucas: We had the opportunity of going to different planets, and by their nature they ended up looking more exotic and being more interesting because we now had the power to do that. I couldn't build Coruscant before so I never got to go there: I had to just sort of refer to it, but I could never actually cut to it. Now I can, so it gives the picture a far more fantastic, visual sweep.

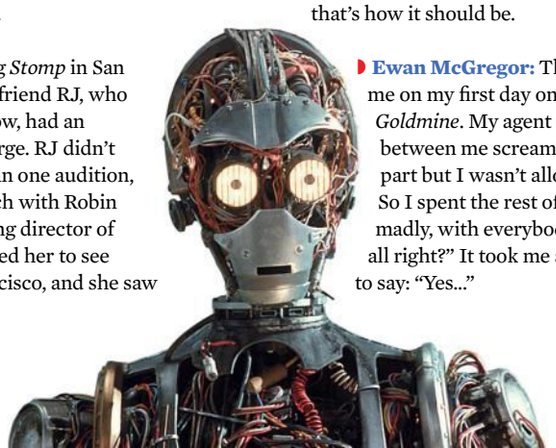
McCallum: He had finally got to the point where he knew the basic outline of the story but was going to wait for the technology to catch up. He wasn't going to get caught up in the whole drama of the first film of risking everything – all his money, all the company's money – until the technology had reached the stage where he could say: "Hey, I can do everything." The difference in what happened between that moment and the time when we started shooting was incredible.

ON CASTING

Lucas: Liam seemed born to play the role of Qui-Gon Jinn. He's very quiet, he's very big, he's very powerful, but he's very contemplative. And Ewan is very witty and enthusiastic and young and impatient. Those things come through. Natalie is very intelligent, has a lot of presence and is a very strong person. At the same time, she's very young. I needed somebody to play a 14-year-old girl who basically could be elected to rule a planet and make that believable. Jake was this wild little Tom Sawyer kid, which was exactly what I was searching for in the young Anakin Skywalker.

Best: I was doing *Stomp* in San Francisco and my friend RJ, who was also in the show, had an audition with George. RJ didn't get any further than one audition, but he kept in touch with Robin Gurland, the casting director of *Episode I*. He invited her to see *Stomp* in San Francisco, and she saw me and asked me to come to Skywalker Ranch for a screen test. So I drove out, all nervous, and did a screen test. I did my outlandish stuff, like crawling on the ground, doing backflips and this martial art called capoeira.

Neeson: Things weren't done how they normally are; y'know, your agent gets a call and you're sent a script to read. I sat down with George and Rick and we talked about everything but *Star Wars*. And then I was offered it a couple of weeks later. Rick called and said: "How do you feel about playing a 60-year-old?" I said: "Well I'm an actor, sure, but..." So Rick went: "I think George sees this Jedi as a 60-year-old." And I said: "Does he have to fight?" Rick went: "Ya." So I said: "Hmmmm... A 60-year-old fighting... couldn't we just make him maybe my age, like 44, then, so we kind of made him like 52." It was a long process, that's how George works, nothing left to chance. And that's how it should be.



Ewan McGregor: The offer came to me on my first day on the set of *Velvet Goldmine*. My agent told me on the phone, between me screaming, that I had the part but I wasn't allowed to tell anybody. So I spent the rest of the day grinning madly, with everybody going: "Are you all right?" It took me about three seconds to say: "Yes..."



Jake Lloyd meets one of his childhood toys while George Lucas looks on.

Natalie Portman: I'd never seen one of the *Star Wars* movies before I went to meet George Lucas at Skywalker Ranch. Then I realised I was facing a three-film deal that carried a near 10-year obligation. And I still didn't know if acting was what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

McGregor: It's not like I signed away 10 years of my life. I do four months on the first one, four months on the second one. However, you have to consider the scale of what all this is about. It's more than just playing a part in a movie, it becomes something else. So you think about that, and I did consider it all... But it's just too much fun not to be in.

ON THE SHOOT

Best: I started working on the movie on 10 June 1997.

McGregor: It was such a real big moment on that first day of the shoot, just getting dressed in the morning in my Jedi gear and everything. I remember standing in front of the mirror with my cloak on.

McCallum: I could have built all of Tunisia on the backlot in England but there is a look, there is a smell and there is an adventure for us shooting in the desert. And then you have to achieve that quality of light, the extras, the wear and tear of the costumes. And that heat... Even if you don't feel that heat when you see it, it's still a question of being there, of being part of it. Just the experience of going there is still worth all that effort, both in economic and creative terms.

But each film has its own thing. For this, we built 60 sets, and there are more than 120 digital matte paintings. The stuff that we did now is the benchmark, especially in terms of character animation. In three years it'll be totally different. It'll be more realistic, ultra realistic.

Lucas: I love Tunisia, and I've made lots of movies there in the desert in the past. It did take a toll on the crew as they're not used to 130-degrees, but everybody put up with it. It's a wonderful place to be.

Best: It's hot. Really hot. Like 154-degrees hot. I had a costume on and I was sweating a lot but I didn't pass out. A lot of people did though, a bunch of creature people. It's hard to stay up in those creature uniforms because you put the head on and it's like being in your personal sauna. A lot of people don't realise that it's hot: there's sand, but there's no water, so it's not the beach. And they would just go out with shorts – short sleeves and no hat in 154 degrees of heat. And at any time the Sun could go: "FZZZ!!! You're done."

Portman: I have 10 different looks. When we were filming, I'd wake up at six in the morning and get home at 9.30 at night. In Tunisia it was over a 100-degrees. The locals don't even bother going out during the daytime. We'd work from 3am to 5pm.

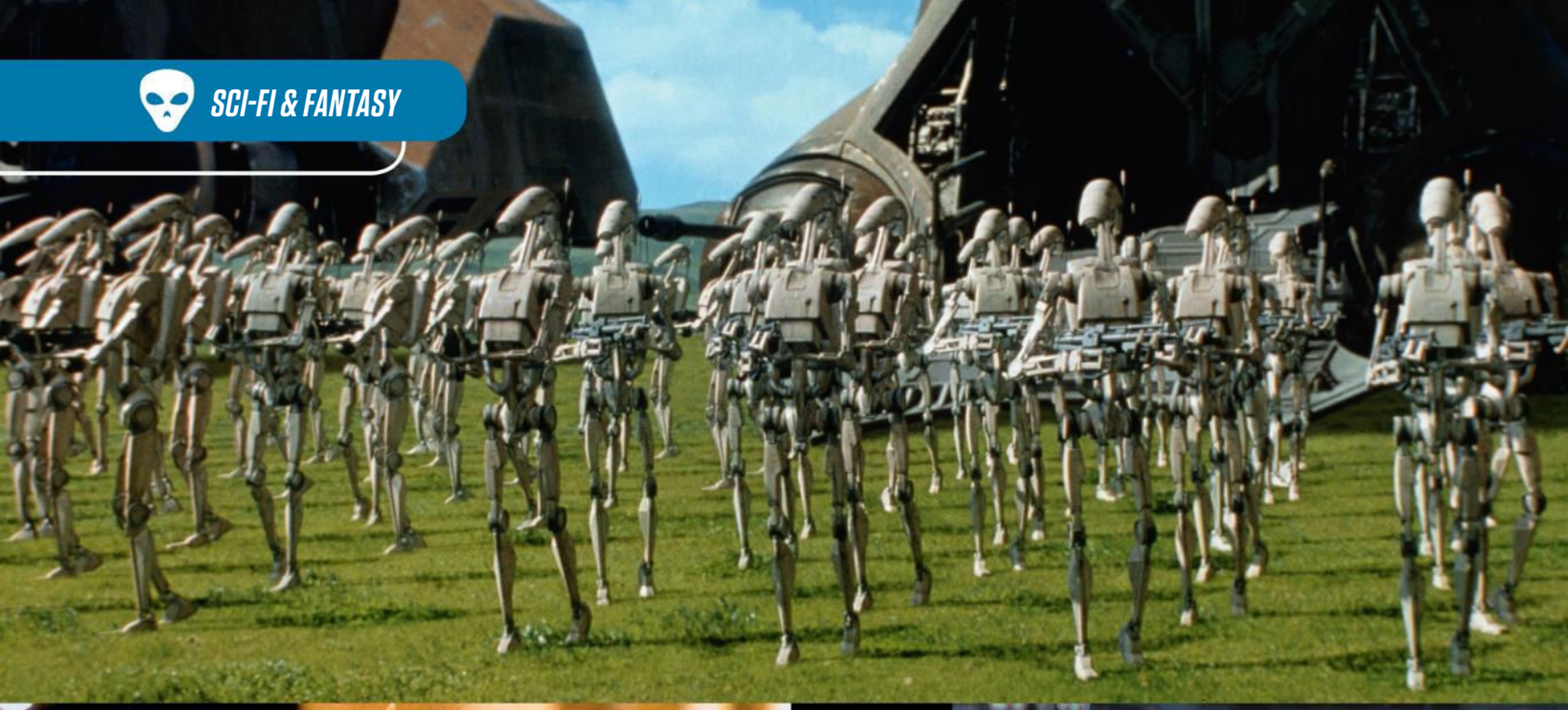
Best: It was fun, really happy, really cool, really easy going. It was like we were all playing *Star Wars* and getting paid for it.

McGregor: It was interesting, because there were so many groups of people who aren't usually on a film set. There's the make-up, wardrobe and hair who are usually there and then there's a bunch of other folk; the ILM boys.

Best: I had to do more work than everyone else because of the computer graphics. You know everybody pretty much finished the movie in four months, but when I finished the four months I still had to go back and forth to ILM to do all the motion capture computer graphic stuff.

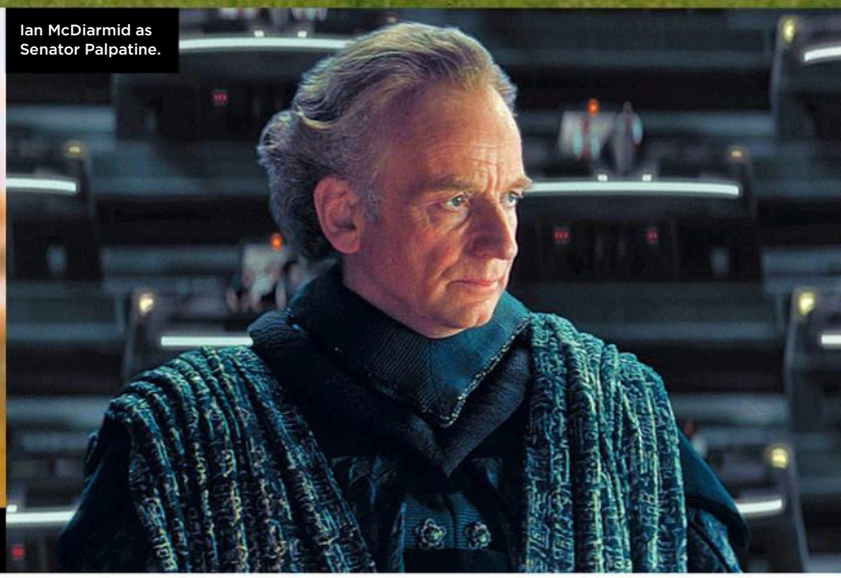
McGregor: Acting against blue screen is bizarre. I've never done it before, but you get better as you go along. You do a series of takes with stand ins, then they're removed and you carry on. The hard bit was when it was me and Liam in the same shot, and we had to ensure we were looking at the same place at the same time.

Best: The character is me. Everything that the character does, I did first. And then they took it →





Darth Maul shoots one of his nasty looks.



Ian McDiarmid as Senator Palpatine.

and put it on a computer and put my cartoon shit around it. But that's me. The walk is me. George Lucas invented the language.

Neeson: There are characters that stand for certain things. I wouldn't have minded a couple more jokes in there, but I guess Jar Jar was taking care of all the laughs.

Lucas: The only way shooting in digital affects a film is that it makes it easier and cheaper for me to do. Converting from analogue to digital all the time, going back and forth – the way it's done now – is very cumbersome and expensive. So this just makes the whole thing easier. Part of *Episode I* was shot digitally: I don't think anybody notices it and we also had a lot of digital actors. I think that will continue to be the case when you need to call on an odd kind of character such as Jar Jar Binks or Watto.

Jake Lloyd: My favourite character in this movie is Jar Jar Binks. I also really like Darth Maul too. And Ray Parks, who plays him, is an excellent, incredible swordsman.

Best: I think pretty much everybody is like their favourite character, I think that's why the movie works so well. Qui-Gon is very much the gentle giant, very much the wisdom; Ewan is very much the young spitfire kick-ass Jedi guy, he's like that in real life; Natalie is very headstrong, regal, commanding yet sweet and tender, the girl next door. Jake? Self explanatory; I mean I could say *anything* about Jake. The kid you know could be either really really good or really bad.

Pernilla, who plays Anakin's mother is probably the most like her character. You just sit and talk to her and you want her to be your mom. In Denver, when they had the three-day convention just before the movie opened, she was so tender. Everybody said: "I want you to be my mother." But they were probably serious, which is a little scary.

Lucas: There is always a big difference between being a young hippy director in his twenties, trying to do a wacky kind of film that nobody has ever seen before, or could even conceive of; and being an older sort of statesman and working with people that knew what they were working on, and knew this was going to work, this was going to be fine. The people who were working on the first film didn't understand it. Nobody did.

McGregor: It was reported that I said *Episode I* was "the most boring film I ever made". Well, the media exaggerates things. Of course when you have a little chat with guys about the technicalities of making a film it's a more tedious process than other things. But I wasn't talking about it in a negative way. It's just the time that it's taking, you know. It's hard work. But I really enjoyed myself – and I'm looking forward to the next two. I saw the first one last night and I was dead pleased, so I can relax now and enjoy the rest. I wasn't bored. How can you ever be bored in *Star Wars*?

McCallum: We finished shooting about two years ago and it's exactly four-and-and-a-half years now that we've been on the film.

ON EDITING

Lucas: When I cut the last reel of the film battles and did all the intercutting – which is a



Jedis were all about the beige back then.



So who's going to win this staring contest?

"THE WAITING IN LINE IS MORE OF THE FUN THAN THE ACTUAL MOVIE"

style I like – I cut it even faster. Then I showed it to some writer and director friends of mine, and they made a casual comment that the intercutting was arbitrary. I knew exactly what they were talking about, because I was going back and forth between those stories about every 30 seconds and it was a little extreme. So I went back to the cutting room and edited it back the way I had before. And that's what you have friends for.

McCallum: When George and I showed it to Steven Spielberg about a week ago, it was the second time he had seen the film. And he said: "You know, it's like Christmas without the bad parts. It's the presents you wanted, those you were afraid you weren't going to get until you actually opened them."

ON THE END PRODUCT

McCallum: It's one of those films that if you are between eight and 18, you'll go and see three or four times. There are little fun things, in every image, but you can't see all the background information if you're watching Liam. There are hidden little treats for everybody. I think there's a subtext of stuff going on with other characters that you really need to see two or three times before you actually get it all together. And for that kind of movie, and with the kind of people who love this universe, they'll get to see it two or three times.

Best: I can't believe I'm in it. Last night I saw my name across the screen and it kind of freaked me out.

Lloyd: I got to keep my Jedi costume. I don't think I will get to wear it much, though. I've pretty much grown out of it.

McCallum: The budget was $120 million and we made it for $115 million. Half of that is just for the effects.

ON ACTION FIGURES

Neeson: Mine doesn't quite stand up. He keeps falling over.

Best: All the figures talk, which is cool. I like the Darth Maul figure cos he just says: "Don't fuck with me." My figure says: "Hi! I'm Jar Jar Binks!" Happy and shit I may be, cool I am not.

ON THE POPULARITY OF STAR WARS

Neeson: I think it's that thing about mythic stories and how Lucas has interpreted those stories in a very clever way. We, as a race of human beings, need to be told stories, and there's something in all of us that reacts to those tales that explain something or help define our existence on this Earth. Given that America's at war at the moment, and has a president who's been disgraced, it's little wonder that the populace may feel quite demoralised by it. Suddenly there's something like the whole *Star Wars* phenomenon, which defines characters that stand for simple ethics of truth and integrity. People want to see these now and be reminded of it.

McCallum: I think there's a need in cinema to have the collective experience you have at a rock concert, and this just happens to be the signal for everybody to go completely wild. Once they see that 20th Century Fox logo, they know that it's a ticket to say: "Go ahead, do whatever you want to."

Lucas: I think a lot of it is not so much mania as it is people wanting to have a good time. We live in very cynical, mean-spirited times and I think a lot of people out there just want to have fun. I think for the people who are queuing up in advance, the waiting in line is probably more of the adventure, more of the fun than the actual movie is when they finally get to see it.

Lloyd: It was great fun doing the film. It's probably one of the best films I've ever done because working with George Lucas is awesome.

ON MEETING HARRISON FORD

Neeson: I got a shock when I saw him standing there at the first screening. I said: "What are you doing here?" He said: "I got a free ticket."

Best: Han Solo was my favourite because he got all the girls. I was sitting next to Han Solo last night. He was laughing at Jar Jar and I went: "Yes!"

McGregor: It was lovely meeting him, I've never met him before and I thought it was really sweet that he came along. He just went: "Well done." I said: "Thanks very much." I wanted to ask him about scarring his chin but I forgot. I've always wanted to know how that happened.

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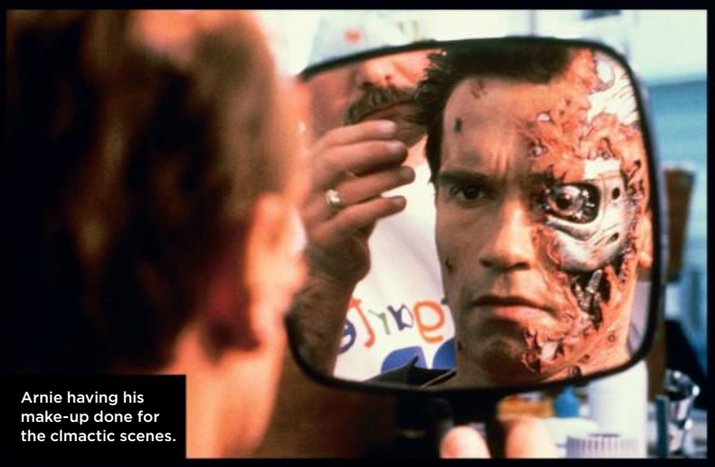


Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Nineteen years after the machines were supposed to take over,* Luke Dormehl *looks back at a film that changed cinematic effects forever...

The script for *Terminator 2* stated that the end of the world as we know it would come about on 29 August 1997. Were you to ask Mario Kassar and Peter Hoffman for their prediction in the early part of 1991, they may well have told you to bring it forward six years.

Kassar and Hoffman were movie execs at Carolco Pictures. One year earlier the upstart production company had been flying high – throwing a party at the Cannes festival with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sly Stallone, Clint Eastwood, Oliver Stone and James Cameron (among others) that was so opulent that it is still talked about today. Carolco's previous blockbuster, Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall*, had done excellent box office, and all involved had been excited about making a follow-up to Cameron's 1984 low budget sci-fi actioner, *The Terminator*. Then it all went wrong. Cameron, it turned out, was a renegade director; a mercurial artist who, it seemed, could feign producer-speak only as long as it took for him to get the money he needed to make his film, at which point he transformed into a different, altogether trickier, customer. Suddenly all of the stories Kassar and Hoffman had heard through the rumour mill ("Think of root canal and start from there," was how one Hollywood executive described working with the director) began to make sense. Only it was too late. And with the film's budget creeping ever closer to – and eventually surpassing – $100 million, they were starting to panic.

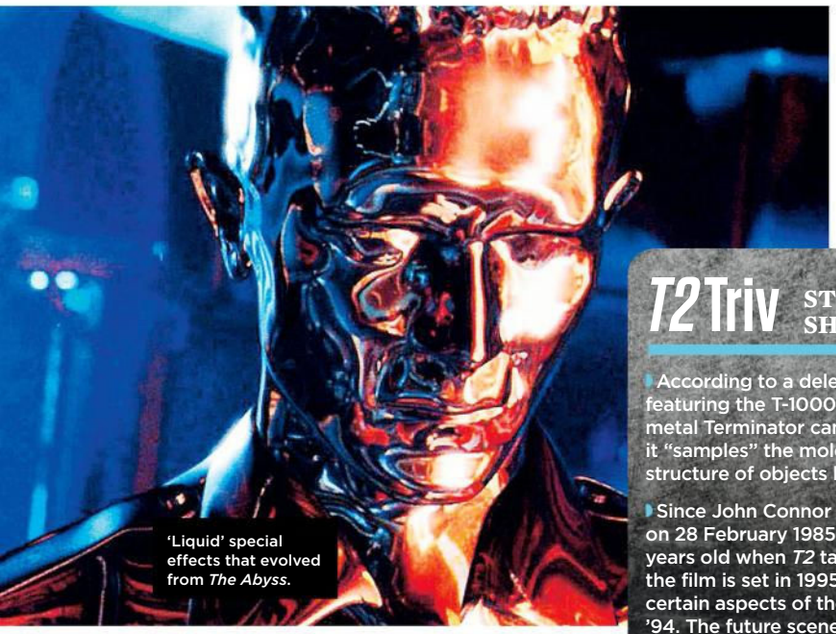


Arnie having his make-up done for the climactic scenes.

"The big issue was that Carolco had given their bank one number that the movie was going to cost, but that wasn't the number we had told them, and nor was that the number that they had agreed to with us," James Cameron's producer at the time, Larry Kasanoff, tells us. "And the press promptly found out about it." Indeed, as would prove to be the case with every major Cameron production from this point on, the bottom line – which was the equivalent of almost four average film budgets at the time – was all anybody was interested in discussing. Not the groundbreaking special effects work. Not the fact that *T2*'s 13-year-old young lead, playing a youthful John Connor, had been plucked off the street with no prior acting experience ("It wasn't something that I planned," actor Edward Furlong would say later.) And not Cameron's remarkable ability to shoot action scenes, the likes of which had never been seen before – and rarely seen since.

But although *Terminator 2* ultimately proved to be the most expensive film ever made at the time of its release, Cameron kept on shooting; →

IMAGE © KOBAL COLLECTION

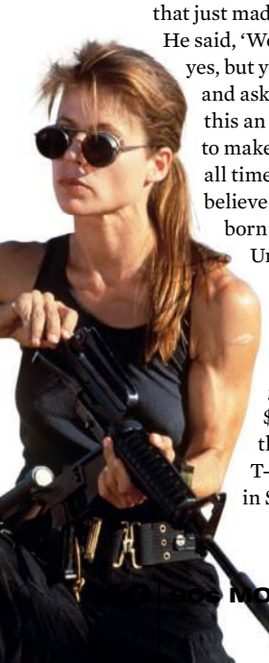


'Liquid' special effects that evolved from *The Abyss*.

secure in the knowledge that the movie he was making was turning out to be every bit as great as he imagined it. "A lot of directors need a lot of producers' help," says Kasanoff. "Jim is not one of them."

SCHWARTZ AND ALL

"Arnold was phenomenal," Kasanoff gushes. "He was so unbelievably great." It is little exaggeration to say that Schwarzenegger, at the time *Terminator 2* was released, was one of the biggest stars in the world. Twelve years before he made the move into politics, and despite his heavily accented English, he was a born orator, the kind of person whose charisma and force of personality alone were able to dazzle people into going along with him. "The first time that I met Arnold, *T2* had just been greenlit and we were in a meeting at TriStar [Pictures] to talk about it," Kasanoff recalls. "He stood up in front of me and Jim [Cameron], the marketing and production VPs and the head of the studio, and gave a speech that just made you want to stand up and cheer. He said, 'We did a good job on *Total Recall*, yes, but you have to wake up every morning and ask yourself what can we do to make this an even better movie. What can we do to make *Terminator 2* the greatest film of all time?' At that moment I honestly believed that if this man was American-born he would be the President of the United States."



Reprising his role as the Terminator (incidentally, check out the film's specially-shot teaser trailer – directed by special effects guru Stan Winston on a budget of $150,000 – which details the construction process of the T-800 model), *T2* acts as a neat bridge in Schwarzenegger's career, bringing together the kind of tough guy Arnie-of-the-'80s with the kinder, gentler Arnie-of-the-'90s. "Here's an example of how involved he was with every facet of production," says Kasanoff. "One of the things I wanted to do was to put together a music video for the film, because back then if you could get a good music video it would get played 15 times a day on MTV. So I asked him whether he would do it, and he said, 'Only if you get the best band in the world to do it.' And I said, 'Okay, who's the best?' And Arnold thought about it and came back to me and said, 'If you get Guns N' Roses I'm in.' But to get them there was a lot of schmoozing with the band and Arnold and Maria [Shriver] invited the band over to their house for dinner one night, and sure enough they agreed."

T2 Triv STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW

- According to a deleted scene featuring the T-1000, the liquid metal Terminator cannot see – it "samples" the molecular structure of objects by touch.



- Since John Connor was born on 28 February 1985, and is 10 years old when *T2* takes place, the film is set in 1995 – although certain aspects of the script suggest '94. The future scenes, showing the fall of Skynet, take place on 11 July 2029.
- The sound of the T-1000 walking through the metal bars was created by holding a can of open dog food upside down and recording the sound of the closely-packed food slowly oozing out.
- The abilities of the T-800 (the Schwarzenegger model) include calculating the distance of objects; analysing body structure, textures and temperatures; doing kinetic studies of trajectories; sampling and analysing the atmosphere; calculating gravity; and imitating human speech. It also has modern laptops beaten – its power cell gives it 120 years of charge.



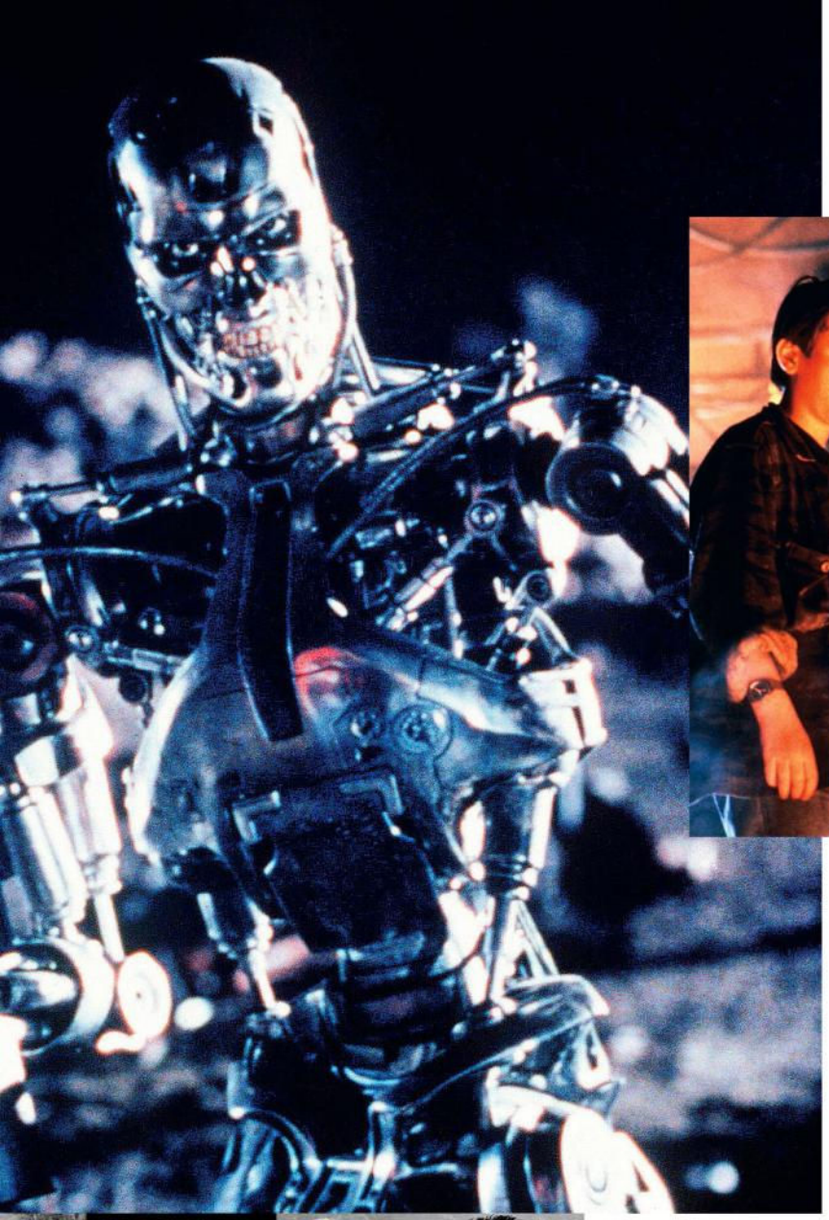
- The Cyberdyne building in the film is a real location in Fremont, a suburb of San Jose. Currently it is home to tech firm Mattson Inc. Additional floors were added for the movie so that James Cameron could blow them up.

Gun crazy in the best of the *Terminator* movies.

W.W.S.C.D. (WHAT WOULD SARAH CONNOR DO?)

Also returning from the first film was Linda Hamilton, who once again portrayed Sarah Connor, in what was undoubtedly the biggest role of her career. Playing a stronger, more psychologically robust character than she did in the first *Terminator* (noting the irony that she begins the movie locked in a mental institution), in this all-action sequel Connor had matured into the arse-kicking, gear-shifting heroine that James Cameron scripts (and possibly dreams) are made of. Originally Cameron wanted to underline this new harder edge to the character by giving her a prominent scar down one side of her face – even going so far as to do make-up tests – but ditched the idea when he realised how complex it would be to recreate the special effect each day of production. "I really wanted her to look like Tom Berenger in *Platoon*," Cameron has said. "And Linda was up for it, because the last thing she had done was playing Beauty in *Beauty And The Beast* for three years."

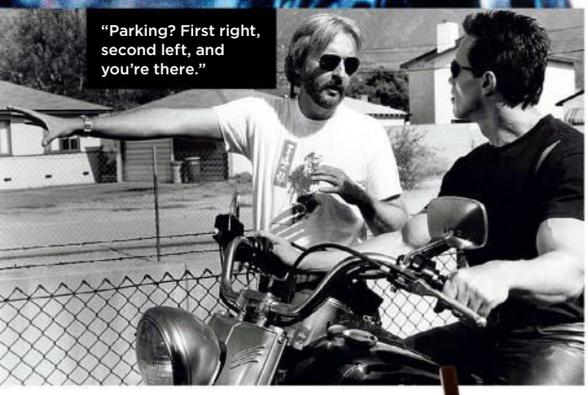
Although she narrates the film's opening and closing monologue, what is most notable about Sarah Connor's part in *T2* is just how surplus she is to requirements. The leading women in James Cameron's movies are generally maternal figures; a characteristic shared by Ellen Ripley





Terminator 2 was hot property alright.

"CAMERON ORIGINALLY WANTED TO GIVE HAMILTON A PROMINENT SCAR"

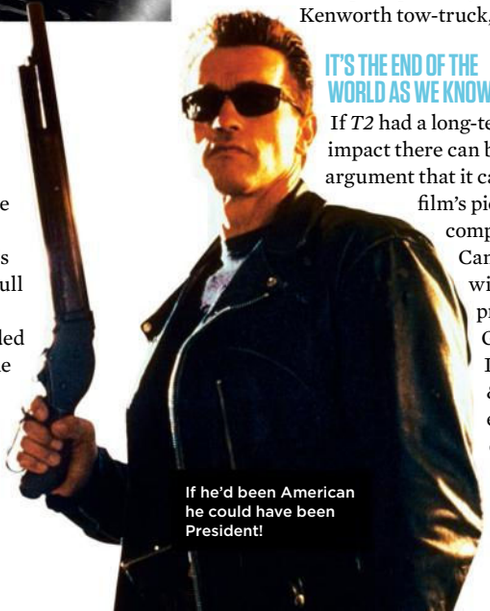


"Parking? First right, second left, and you're there."

– Cameron's previous screen heroine in *Aliens* – and Connor in the *Terminator* films. In *T2*, however, Arnie himself plays the nurturing protector; his role as surrogate mother underlined by the figurative castration that is his inability to use his gun to its full lethal potential.

And neither is Connor needed to ramp up the sex quota of the movie. While movie bosses probably liked the idea of an attractive lady on the poster to help sell tickets (and Cameron – *the person* – himself obviously fancied Linda Hamilton, since the two got married a few years later), Cameron – *the director* – has only ever had eyes for high technology. The sex appeal in *T2* is in the oozing 3D graphics of the liquid metal T-1000, and the fetishistic detail with which Cameron renders his favourite big vehicles (from the shooting script: "The Kenworth tow-truck... is all muscle, tearing along the canal like a train in a tunnel. Its big tires send up huge sheets of muddy spray, backlit in the setting sun").

Who needs a pin-up when you've got a big Kenworth tow-truck, eh?



If he'd been American he could have been President!

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

If *T2* had a long-term cinematic impact there can be little argument that it came from the film's pioneering use of computer graphics. Cameron had toyed with using CGI provided by George Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic visual effects company on his previous film – 1989's *The Abyss* (in which every effect had to fit into 900MB of online storage) – but *T2*'s pre- and post-apocalyptic environment stretched the boundaries of what was possible to achieve with the effects of the day to almost breaking point. Most notably, of course, was the "nanomorph mimetic poly-alloy" T-1000 Terminator (played in eminently creepy human form by actor Robert Patrick). "The concept of the liquid metal man was an idea that I had had a good ten years earlier when I was conceptualising the first film," Cameron has said. "There was no way to do it – claymation was the only thing I could think of back in the early '80s and I didn't think that was going to be mind-blowing enough. So when we got to [*Terminator 2*] the residue of that early idea was still floating around, but in the meantime we had done *The Abyss* so there was some proof of concept that some kind of liquid character could actually be done. That ultimately became the T-1000."

"You've got to understand the morphing effects, which two years later were ubiquitous, had never really been done," Kasanoff says. "The pressure on Jim to make sure that that was going to work was intense. People in Hollywood have a tendency to be sycophants as well – and to say what they think Jim wanted to hear, when he asked whether a particular effect worked or not – but obviously that's not going to help once the film comes out. But thank god it all worked out in the end. And I think it changed the way that movies are made forever."

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The Rise And Fall Of The Batman

In 1989 Tim Burton released a colourful gothic nightmare reboot of Batman, a million miles from the spandex camp of Adam West's long running TV depiction. It heralded in a new era for superhero movies which peaked and then almost as quickly declined throughout the '90s. We chart the fortunes of the caped crusader...

TIM BURTON ON WHY HE WAS DRAWN TO THE DARK KNIGHT:

"I was never a giant comic book fan but I've always loved the image of Batman and the Joker. I loved Batman, the split personality, the hidden person. Having a light side and a dark side, and not being able to resolve them. I can see certain aspects of myself in the character. Everyone has several sides to their personality; no one is one thing. People often represent themselves as one thing but are really something else. Which is symbolic of the character.

"Casting Batman, I saw a zillion people and the thing that kept going through my mind when I saw these action-adventure hero types come into the office was, 'Why would this macho, Arnold Schwarzenegger-type person dress up as a bat?' I'd worked with Michael Keaton before and I thought he'd be perfect because he's got that look in his eye. It's there in *Beetlejuice*. He does it because he needs to. It's all about transformation. Suddenly the whole thing clicked.

"I grew up on the Batman series. It was campy, and luckily comic books had gone through a new phase; they had made things darker. We tried to put Robin in, to make that relationship work in a real way. Sam [Hamm, screenwriter] and I spent a lot of time anguishing over it. In the end I went back to the psychology of a man who dresses up as a bat; he's a very singular, lonely character, and putting him with somebody didn't make sense.



"I never did like purple suits."

Batman 1989

★★★★☆ ***Tim Burton puts the Goth into Gotham...***

"I'M BATMAN." REALLY? Or are you stand-up comic-turned-actor Michael Keaton? The odd, twitchy star of *Beetlejuice* hardly seemed like the Bruce Wayne described in the original script as a 6ft4 brute with "muscles on top of muscles, scarred from nightly combat."

Everyone – even Batman creator Bob Kane – was sceptical. But after comic-book fans sent 50,000 letters of protest to Warner Bros, Keaton made them eat every word with a performance that would redefine the Dark Knight for the next two decades.

The casting – like most of Tim Burton's movie – was bizarrely perfect. Revealing Bruce Wayne to be an awkward, lonely obsessive and Batman a stiffly psychotic vigilante, Keaton's two-faced turn is subtle, forceful and haunted. "You're not exactly normal, are you?" says Kim Basinger's journo Vicki Vale. Keaton snaps back: "It's not a normal world." In Burton's hands, it certainly isn't. Hijacking the creepy lighting of film noir, Burton and his Oscar-winning production designers invoke Expressionist horrors like *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* and even Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Lit up by Danny Elfman's score, it becomes the nightmare stage for a duel between two freaks who've created each other.

> **"This twisted vision of cartoon wit and pulp grandeur still feels unique"**

But even *Batman*'s pop-Gothic visuals are nothing compared with the style overkill of Jack Nicholson's Joker. Emerging from a vat of toxic waste, he's a funny, frightening caricature whose deranged energy infects the entire film. Defacing classic paintings and gorgeous women, rocking green hair and purple suits, sliding his dialogue through a painted rictus grin, Nicholson goes off the leash with a luridly disfigured performance.

Easy to forget that, despite the pop-pulp stylistics, *Batman*'s violence is regularly startling. From the traumatic murder of Bruce Wayne's parents to the Joker's final fall, Burton strikes an unsettling tone of brutality and comedy. Not everything works – the director admits it. "I liked parts of it, but the whole movie is mainly boring," he said. "It's OK, but it was more of a cultural phenomenon than a great movie."

What can't be argued over is its phenomenal influence. Each summer, Hollywood attempts to recapture *Batman*'s extraordinary success at box office and merchandising counters alike. But Burton and Keaton's twisted vision of cartoon wit, psychological darkness and pulp grandeur still feels unique.

JONATHAN CROCKER

THE VERDICT "A brilliant film, visionary and extraordinarily idiosyncratic." Christopher Nolan there, giving his verdict on Burton's seminal superhero blockbuster. We're with Chris on this one.

Certificate 15 **Director** Tim Burton **Starring** Jack Nicholson, Michael Keaton, Kim Basinger, Michael Gough, Billy Dee Williams **Screenplay** Sam Hamm, Warren Skaaren **Running time** 121 mins →


"Remind me not to ask you to darn my socks."

Batman Returns 1992

★★★★☆ *This time it's personal...*

WITH HINDSIGHT, IT WASN'T JOEL SCHUMACHER WHO SCUPPERED THE FIRST BATMAN FRANCHISE. It was Tim Burton. After Burton's first outing made $411m worldwide, Warner was so desperate that he should direct a sequel they granted his wish – to dispense with meddling, vetting studio execs (and DC flamekeepers) and make instead a Tim Burton movie featuring Batman. The finished film, while opening bigger than its predecessor, made 'only' $267m worldwide, leading the studio to believe a lighter touch was needed with subsequent installments...

Two decades on, *Batman Returns* still feels adult and unexpected, sidelining its antihero for the villains' latex-ed sexuality and 12-rated body horror. Superficially, the plot predicts *The Dark Knight*; Batman is targeted, then does something with radio frequencies. But beneath the surface, it's about what's beneath the surface... Duality is the subtext du jour, with Michael Keaton's Bruce Wayne (almost too square for his own sequel, in slacks and tweed jacket) seeing his alter egos in his adversaries: vicious businessman Max Shreck (Christopher Walken, as Max Zorin in a grey wig), nine-lives secretary Selina Kyle (Michelle Pfeiffer, one 'wardrobe malfunction' away from filth) and born-wealthy-and-rejected Oswald Cobblepot (a predatory Danny DeVito). "Gotham's own Santa Claus" to the public, Shreck's the boss from hell to Kyle. She – revived by feral cats just as Cobblepot was raised by penguins – fights her desires as hard as she battles kindred-spirit Batman; besuited, they enact S&M scenarios, taking turns at hurting.

> "Michael Keaton's Bruce Wayne is almost too square"

The Penguin could have been "bunkies at prep school" with fellow rich-kid Wayne (as Shreck taunts), if he hadn't so appalled his parents they threw him in the river. Where Burton and the Cobblepots differ is the director embraced his grotesque offspring, defending its darkness from detractors. Today, to his credit, it's arguably the alpha male of the first four films.

EMMA MORGAN

THE VERDICT More Burton than DC, with more misfits than heroes, *Batman Returns* retains a darkness rare to tentpole movies, as the superfreaks make Bruce Wayne seem more country squire than sociopath.

Certificate 12 **Director** Tim Burton **Starring** Michael Keaton, Michelle Pfeiffer, Christopher Walken, Danny DeVito **Screenplay** Daniel Waters **Running time** 121 mins



Batman Forever 1995

★★★☆☆

"Your entrance was good – his was better," yells Jim Carrey's Riddler, chiding Tommy Lee Jones' Two-Face as Batman swoops upon them. "The difference? Showmanship." And that's what Joel Schumacher's first Bat-film is all about. From Carrey's cane-twirling to Jones' coin-flipping, everyone has a trick – even Chris O'Donnell's trapeze artist, who becomes trusted sidekick Robin to Val Kilmer's chiselled Dark Knight. Brighter than Burton's Gothic Gotham, mixing pop-psychology (duality is rife), social satire (Riddler's brain-zapping TV 'box'), and two-for-one villain fun, it's like a riotous circus act. Exuberant, over-the-top and, well, Bat-ty. **JAMES MOTTRAM**



Batman & Robin 1997

★☆☆☆☆

Original tagline: "Strength. Courage. Honour. And loyalty. On 20 June, it ALL comes together." On 20 June, it all fell apart. Though a decent-sized hit ($238m worldwide), Joel Schumacher's second Bat-flick put the franchise back some 30 years, to the camp old days of Adam West. But where West and co seemed in on the joke, there's no fun in watching actors as visibly uncomfortable as George Clooney (as Bats) and Alicia Silverstone (Batgirl). Schumacher shoots his entire load with the OTT opening; the rest is a neon nightmare of bad puns, overdressed sets and Arnie in polar-bear slippers. One shot in Silverstone's makeover montage says it all: arse.

MATTHEW LEYLAND

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WATERWORLD

Almost everything you think you know about Kevin Costner's blockbuster is wrong, explains Luke Dormehl

Imagine the scenario. You're a starving screenwriter, living in Los Angeles. One day you come up with the idea for a script that starts out as a "low-budget *Mad Max* rip-off". Somewhere along the line it gets more ambitious and, through a couple of friends, you get it into the hands of an agent, themselves just starting out in the business. Then things go nuts. Overnight, there's a bidding war for your script. Major movie studios get involved. You go from zero to Hollywood hero. Before long, the script gets into the hands of a director-star combo, who decide to make it as the next collaboration in their successful series of movies.

That, in a nutshell, is the story of Peter Rader. "It was an extraordinary, head-spinning two weeks," he tells us. "Within the space of a fortnight I went from having the script sent out by this young agent I was introduced to by a couple of friends to having a closed movie deal. I was driving a beaten-up old Corolla and struggling to make the rent. Suddenly I had this high six-figure deal with a major studio, and an agreement that they would buy my next script, sight unseen." Just days later, Rader's dad flew over from London to Los Angeles to see his son. Rader hired a limousine to pick his dad up from the airport. "We had champagne on the way home," he says.

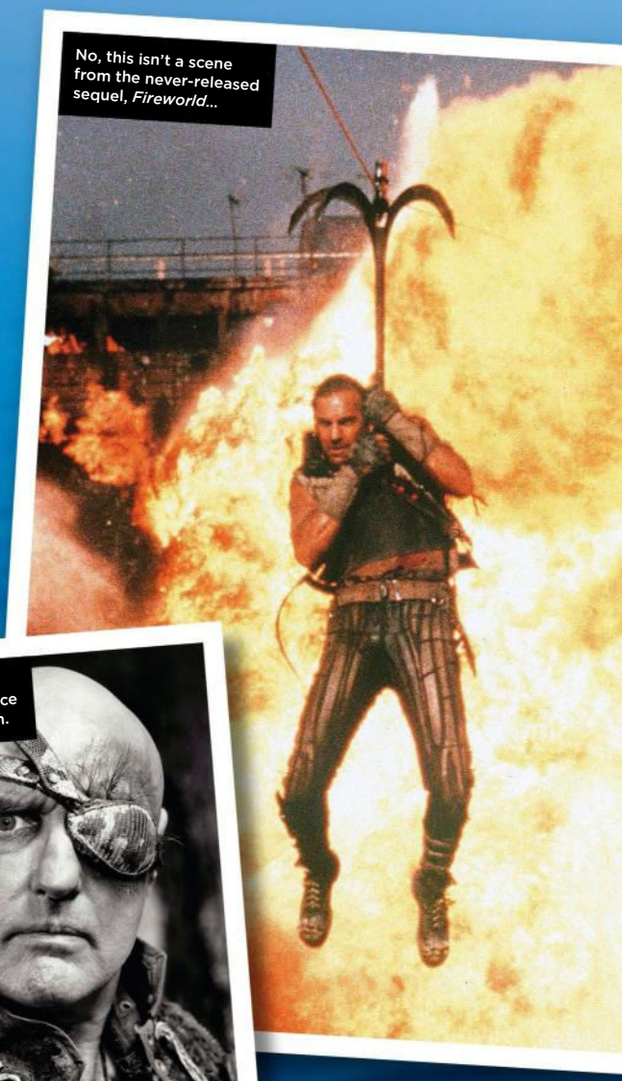
This is how post-apocalyptic movies often begin: with a flashback to happier times, before the world is annihilated by invading aliens, turned into a warzone by gleaming Austrian cyborgs, or drowned beneath melted Polar ice caps. The script Rader was paid $350,000 for (plus an extra $150k if it successfully reached screens) was *Waterworld*, a 1995 movie that has gone down in history as one of the great Hollywood disasters.

Arriving at almost exactly the same time as *SFX* #1 hit newsstands, *Waterworld* tells the story of "the Mariner", an antihero drifter played by Kevin Costner, who sails a watery Earth searching for dry land, while drinking his own purified urine.

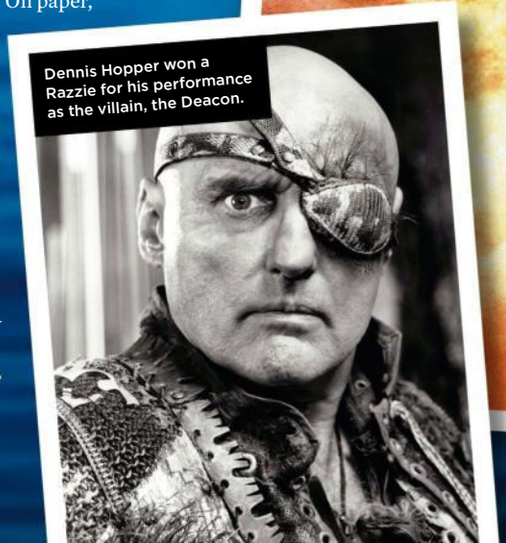
But if you think that existence sounds miserable, you haven't heard the sorry tales of those involved with a production that ran out of control in just about every way possible.

WATER WAY TO GO

To work out where *Waterworld* went so wrong, you've first got to examine why it appeared at the time to be so right. On paper, the film looked perfect. In the mid-1990s, few movie stars were bigger than Kevin Costner: then fresh off the release of *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*, *Dances With Wolves* and *The Bodyguard*, Costner was one of a select few post-'80s stars who could sell an action →



No, this isn't a scene from the never-released sequel, *Fireworld*...



Dennis Hopper won a Razzie for his performance as the villain, the Deacon.



IMAGE © KOBAL



Careful, you could take someone's eye out with that. Oh, hang on...



"I do not deserve a Razzie!!!"



The many sets built on water proved to be enormously troublesome.

movie without enormous muscles or an oversized gun. For *Waterworld*, he was paired once again with his *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* director, Kevin Reynolds.

Right from the start it was clear that trouble was brewing. After Rader's script was bought, he was dragged into what seemed like an endless process of rewrites, with five, six, seven drafts all written and then discarded. Rader himself was eventually let go and a host of other writers brought in to take a crack at the screenplay. "I didn't realise a writer could be fired. That's how naive I was," Rader says. David Twohy, the screenwriter behind *The Fugitive* and *The Chronicles Of Riddick*, is the only one to share an on-screen credit with Rader in the finished movie, although there were plenty of others – including genre legend Joss Whedon.

Script difficulties were just the tip of the (melted) iceberg for *Waterworld*'s problems, however. Ever since the disastrous shoot for *Jaws* in the '70s, the challenges of filming at sea were well known. "[*Waterworld*'s filmmakers] actually spoke to Spielberg before they began production," Rader recalls. "He told them, 'For god's sake, whatever else you do, don't shoot the whole movie on water. Do it on a soundstage.' They chose to ignore that advice."

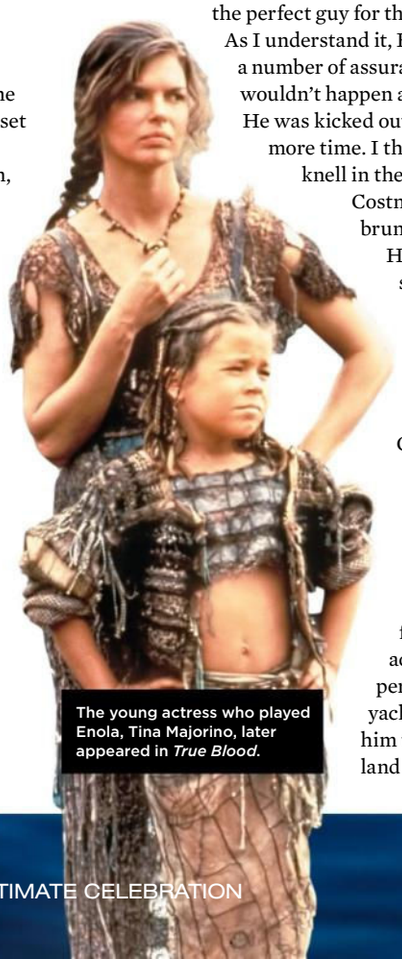
Making big-budget Hollywood movies doesn't come with a "how to" manual, but if it did, one of the points would likely be that producers ignore Steven Spielberg at their peril. Almost appearing to tempt the cinema gods, the movie's filming location was chosen as Hawaii's Kawaihae Harbor. Too late they discovered that the name translated as "rough waters". The resulting seasickness and constantly changing weather conditions made it a massive headache for all involved. At one point during filming, an entire set sank and had to be retrieved.

Three weeks into production, Rader visited the set. "By that point they were already three weeks behind schedule," he says.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

Waters were far from calm between director and star, too. Despite having worked together multiple times before – most notably on 1991's *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* – *Waterworld* turned out to be a headache for all involved as lead actor (and producer) Kevin Costner butted heads with director Kevin Reynolds. It wasn't the first time.

"Kevin Costner and Kevin Reynolds had this crazy love-hate relationship going back to film school days," says Rader. "Costner would bring Reynolds into a project to direct him, then kick him out of the editing room. After *Robin Hood* they weren't talking to each other. But, of course, as soon as Kevin Costner got interested in *Waterworld*, he said, 'I know the perfect guy for this.' And it was Reynolds. As I understand it, Kevin Reynolds was given a number of assurances that the same thing wouldn't happen again. And guess what? He was kicked out of the editing room one more time. I think that was the death knell in their relationship."



The young actress who played Enola, Tina Majorino, later appeared in *True Blood*.

Costner wound up taking the brunt of the movie's bad press. Having risen to A-list status in the years before, by the time *Waterworld* set sail for cinemas the impression was that he had got too big for his fishing boots. Costner was paid $14 million for appearing in the movie, but the vast sums of money being hurled about didn't stop there. Everything was dissected in the press: from the cost of his accommodation ($1,800 per night) to the $800,000 yacht acquired for ferrying him the 400 yards from dry land to movie set.

FIVE GREAT ECO-FRIENDLY SCI-FI MOVIES

Soylent Green
Is there a single person who doesn't know the twist by now? Still eminently watchable and more than a little creepy.

WALL*E
Pixar robot cleans up Earth after it becomes a consumerist wasteland. Pixar cleans up by selling tie-in toys.

Silent Running
Plants are preserved in a giant greenhouse in space after Earth's plant life dies. Who would think a sci-fi movie about gardening would be so good?



The Mad Max saga
The Mad Max movies portray a world driven into chaos by the using up of the last of our oil reserves.

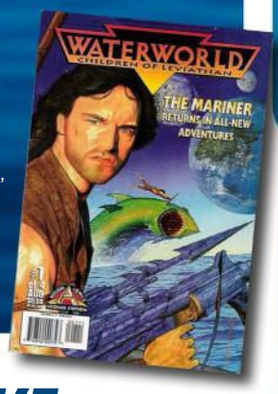
Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home
What do you do after seeking out strange new worlds and battling Klingons? Save the humpback whales, of course.



Basic Instinct's Jeanne Tripplehorn co-starred as Helen.

(WATER)WORLD BUILDING

Few one-off movies do as good a job of world building as *Waterworld*, which establishes a Planet Earth, circa 2500, in which the polar ice caps have melted, and the sea now covers almost all of the land. Twenty-one years later, we're unlikely to ever get a sequel to the movie, but fans can flesh out the universe if they so wish. A tie-in novel provides a bit more detail about the world, while a four-issue 1997 comic book sequel does exist, titled *Waterworld: Children Of Leviathan*. Kevin Costner didn't permit the artist to use his likeness, which explains why the Mariner undergoes a facelift between stories.



"SPIELBERG TOLD THEM, 'FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T SHOOT THE WHOLE MOVIE ON WATER'"

The end result of all this messiness was a waterlogged shooting schedule, which ballooned from an optimistic 96 days to a downright epic 166 days: almost half a year of non-stop filming. The budget expanded too, like the waistband of a pair of elasticated trousers at an all-you-can-eat buffet. When Costner signed on, *Waterworld* was budgeted at a not-inconsiderable $65 million. After all was said and done, the film cost $175 million to bring to the screen. Adjusted for inflation, it cost more than *Avatar*.

"You know what the crazy part is?" laughs Peter Rader. "When I first wrote the script, one producer turned it down flat, saying, 'You think I'm made of money? This thing will cost three million to shoot.' If only they'd known."

THE FLOP THAT WASN'T

According to popular legend, what happened next was one of Hollywood's most infamous money-losers: a movie which barely registered a ripple of interest from audiences.

In fact, the truth is somewhat different.

Waterworld earned $264 million in cinemas and went on to be a hit on video and television. An unspecified marketing budget plus the magic of movie accounting means it's difficult to know exactly when *Waterworld* broke even, but it did. Today, it is a profitable film in Universal's back catalogue. The film's real success, however, was a theme park attraction called Waterworld: A Live Sea War Spectacular. In the years that followed, the Sea War played thousands of live shows in five different parks around the world. "That was where the film did really well in terms of licensing," says Peter Rader. "I still get residual cheques for it, even 20 years on."

Perhaps even more surprising is that, all things considered, *Waterworld* is actually a pretty decent film, more than worthy of a critical reappraisal. Far from being the debacle that makes the disastrous *Batman & Robin* look like *Citizen Kane* as some believe, the movie stands up as a post-apocalyptic epic. The filmmakers chose to avoid using CGI and instead go for practical effects, which might have seemed disappointing in 1995, but is a godsend when watching the movie today and being spared the kind of graphics which look like they belong on a first gen PlayStation.

Kevin Costner makes a good lead, too, despite the critical drubbing he took at the time. His character is a gruff antihero that borrows from Costner's Robin Hood persona and adds a level of gritty stoicism. Even the once-mocked fact that he plays a mutant (something which prompted critics at the time to mockingly label the film *Fishtar*, in reference to 1987's flop *Ishtar*) seems decidedly less silly in an age of Aquaman and X-Men movies.

The real selling point of *Waterworld*, however, is the superbly over-the-top performance by Dennis Hopper, who criminally won a Razzie for his performance. Having made his comeback to the big time as the gas-huffing villain in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, Hopper's performance in *Waterworld* may lack subtlety, but it's a blast to watch. "Dennis Hopper is absolutely fantastic in the film," says Rader. "He just went to town with that role, sinking his teeth into it and hamming it up like crazy."

Waterworld may be synonymous with Hollywood gone wrong, but if anything it speaks to the strange relationship we have with ultra-expensive movies – and with the stars we raise up to the superheroic level of modern gods. Turning 21 this year (and, as noted, sharing a birthday with *SFX* magazine) it's a film we have a not-so-secret soft spot for: the Hollywood flop that really wasn't.

So give the movie another shot. Tell 'em that we sent you. 90s

IMAGE © KOBAL



REALITY



INC

In 1999 a sci-fi film burst out of the blue, mixing rule-breaking special effects with profound, head-spinning philosophy and relaunching Keanu Reeves' career. Tumble down the rabbit hole and into THE MATRIX...

WORDS FIRST PUBLISHED IN DVD REVIEW MAGAZINE





Style kings (and queen): Keanu Reeves and co caught the eye.

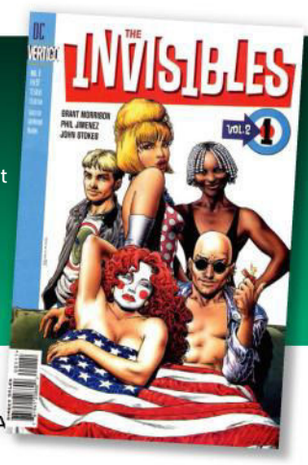
It was the end of the second millennium and sci-fi geeks the world over were waiting for one thing: a film that would redefine onscreen SF, thrill them beyond measure, and take them back to the sheer excitement *A New Hope* had created back in 1977. As it turned out, they got exactly what they expected... except the name of the film wasn't *The Phantom Menace* (more on that on p32). 1999 was the most seismic year in onscreen sci-fi since *Star Wars*. And it was all thanks to *The Matrix*. Created by a pair of screenwriter siblings whose only previous directing work was lesbian-chic noir thriller *Bound*, *The Matrix* was a film nobody expected to like – especially since Keanu Reeves' last dabble in 'virtual reality' thrillers had been the disastrous cyberpunk adaptation *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995). As it turned out, however, the Wachowskis had created a dense and multi-layered philosophical action saga so exciting, nobody seemed to mind that they'd hijacked massive chunks of their dark apocalyptic tale from Japanese animation, *The Terminator*, the works of *Blade Runner* author Philip K Dick, old kung fu movies and a dozen other sources.

"THE WACHOWSKIS CREATED A PHILOSOPHICAL ACTION SAGA"

A story where the 'real world' is an illusion perpetrated by evil insectoid machines, and where only a small number of super-powered freedom fighters know the truth, it's a thrilling, imaginative adventure that melds Jean-Paul Sartre with John Woo. And it left cinema audiences reeling in astonishment. As Reeves' Neo peels back the layers of reality, learns the truth about his machine-controlled existence and says "Woah" a lot, the film also ends up owing much of its mythic structure to the same pattern followed by the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Like Luke Skywalker, Neo is plucked out of a dull life into a world of adventure, trained up by a wise mentor, ends up battling against the bad guys and is presented with a choice where he has to put himself in danger for the greater good. Admittedly, Luke didn't deal with his problems in *Episode V* by strolling into Cloud City dressed in a trenchcoat and blowing the crap out of everyone within range, but the principle's the same, and it's the classic storytelling at the heart of *The Matrix* that makes it such an engaging, universal story. It also helped that *The Matrix* featured one of the best villains since Vader

DID YOU KNOW?

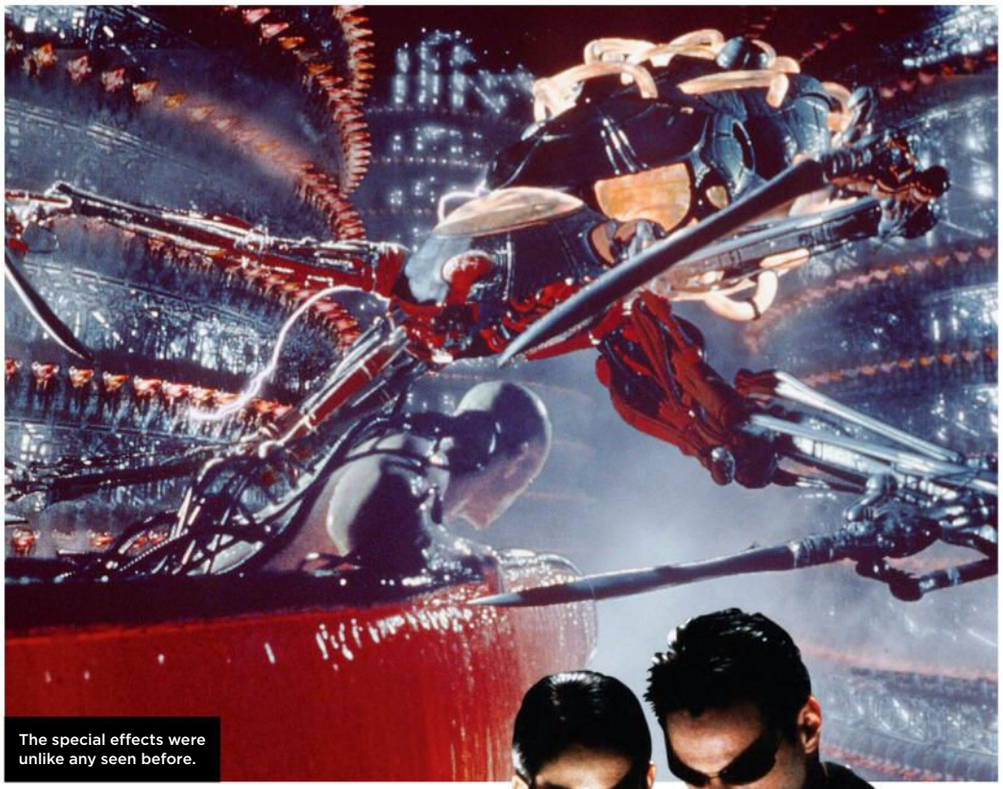
The Matrix bears a strong resemblance to anarchic comic book saga *The Invisibles* – to such an extent that the comic's writer, Grant Morrison, considered legal action against the film at one point.



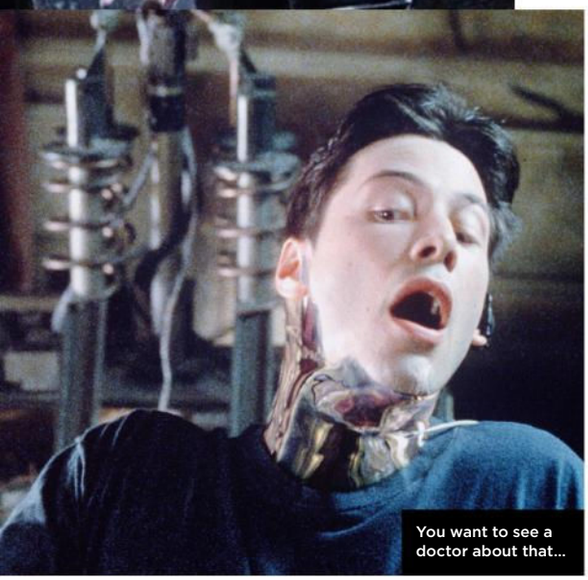
The famous bullet time effect wasn't actually invented for *The Matrix*. It had been used several years previously in adverts by director Michel Gondry, and was refined by the *Matrix* special effects team.







The special effects were unlike any seen before.



You want to see a doctor about that...

wheezed his way onscreen. With the moves of Bruce Lee and the voice of a '50s newscaster, sentient program Agent Smith is an incredible adversary who, thanks to Hugo Weaving's stony-faced performance, almost hijacks the movie from the stunning visuals. That he doesn't quite manage it is a testament to the still jaw-dropping special effects, and while the bullet time sequences may have been parodied to death, in 1999 they were the epoch-shaking equivalent of *Episode IV*'s opening Star Destroyer shot and made it seem like we were entering a universe where anything was possible. Sadly, of course, it all went rather wrong. After riding the crest of the *Phantom Menace* backlash in 1999, the Wachowskis got a taste of their own medicine when, in 2003, their hugely anticipated back-to-back sequels *Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix* →



Future's so bright they had to wear shades.

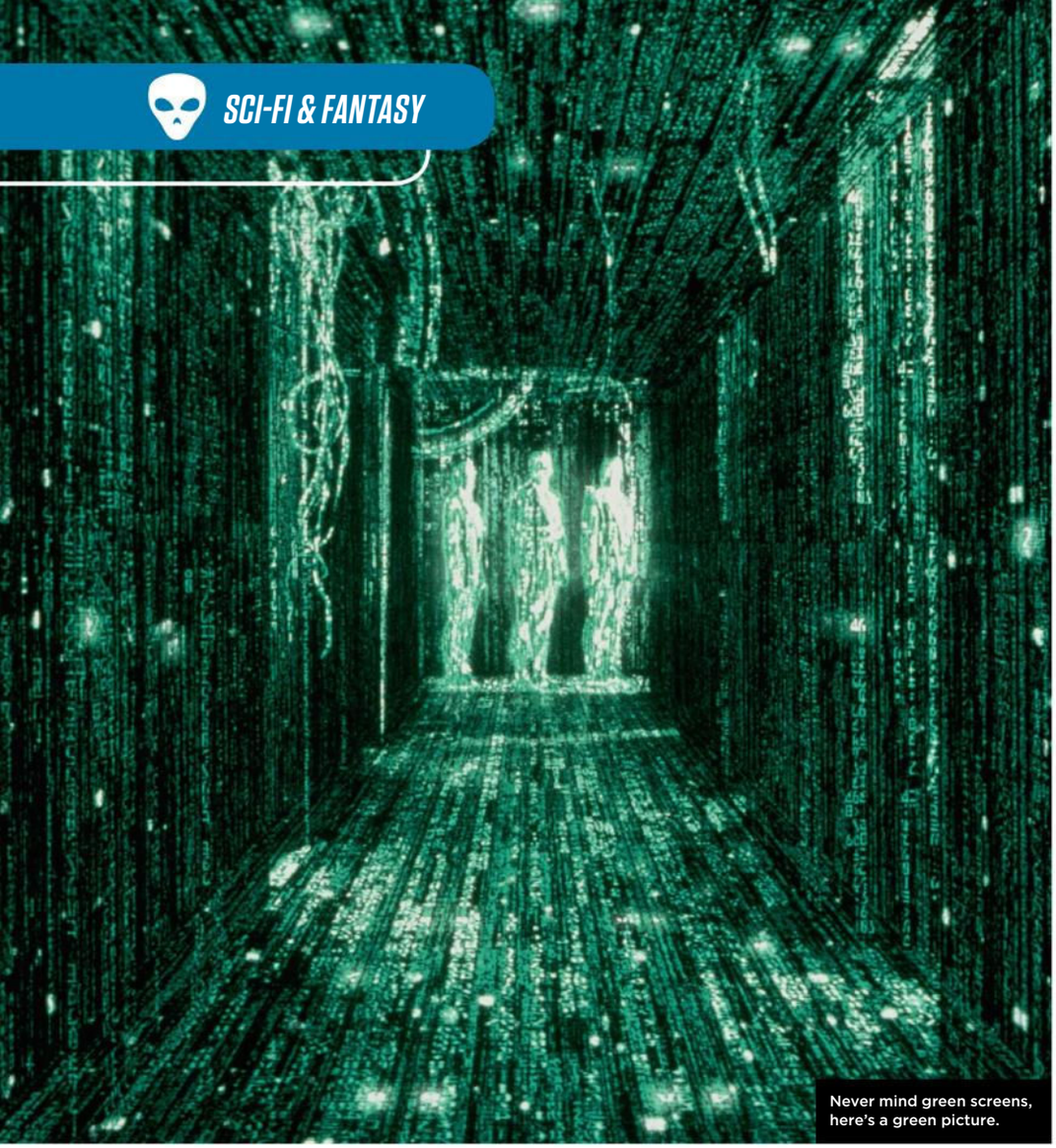
The film's casting went through plenty of changes – Johnny Depp was the Wachowskis' first choice for Neo, while both Val Kilmer and Sean Connery were offered Morpheus but turned the role down.

The 'Woman in Red' sequence, in which Morpheus takes Neo through a simulation of the Matrix, features a massive number of identical twins in order to suggest the idea of a repeating program.



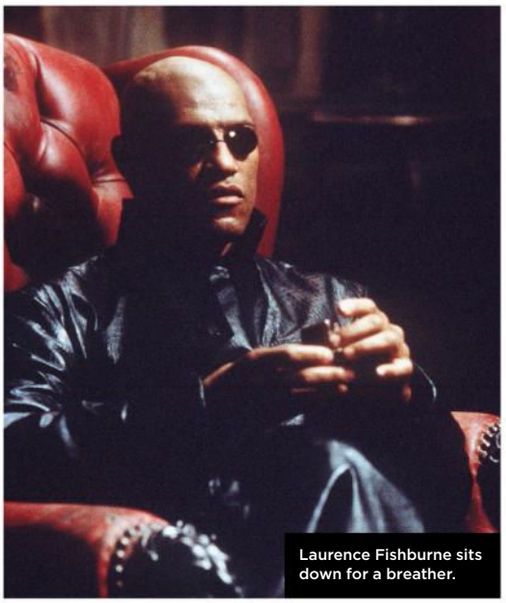
The film was nearly shut down as a result of the sequence with Neo and Morpheus dangling from a helicopter, because the chopper accidentally strayed into restricted airspace while shooting.

The bizarre footage of giant rabbits seen on a TV screen at one point comes from the 1972 movie *Night Of The Lepus*. They're a reference to *Alice In Wonderland*'s White Rabbit – a recurring theme in the movie.



Never mind green screens, here's a green picture.

"IT EXPANDED THE LIMITS OF WHAT CINEMATIC SF COULD ACHIEVE"



Laurence Fishburne sits down for a breather.

IMAGES © ALLSTAR, KOBAL COLLECTION, GETTY

Revolutions turned out to be pretentious messes. Yes, there was plenty of groundbreaking action, but both movies were also far too ambitious for their own good, introducing dozens of characters nobody cared about and cranking the philosophy up to brain-aching levels. Worst offender for this was the infamous 'Architect' sequence, which was supposed to explain the secret behind the Matrix and instead left audiences worldwide scratching their heads in confusion. Without the classic structure of the original movie, the Wachowskis were lost. And thanks to the spectacular but underwhelming climax, *The Matrix* ended not with a bang, but with a whimper. What it didn't do, however, was take anything away from the first movie's amazing achievement; while the trilogy might be problematic, *The Matrix* itself can still hold its head up proudly as one of *Episode IV*'s only true rivals.

It's a film that truly expanded the limits of what cinematic sci-fi could achieve.



The Matrix, according to John Gaeta was always intended to be a live-action version of a comic-book "It's seriously anime-driven in energy, composition and ideas," he says. "The Wachowskis just wanted to go totally over the top and demonstrate that previous models of action scenes are old and stale. It was their intention to go completely all the way, Hong Kong-style." To this end, the movie features a series of flow-motion shots (as they're called) that achieve the seemingly-impossible – fast camera movements combined with slow-motion events. "Japanese anime cartoons break down action into its component parts and we wanted to recreate this," he says. Since it's physically impossible to move a camera that fast, the FX team constructed a 'flow-mo' rig consisting of one conventional movie camera and 119 still cameras, which were placed along a set path in a green-screen studio so that the background could be put in later. "The green screen was less about razzle-dazzle and more about practicality because we wanted to shoot the foreground subject carefully and with control. Things like wire removal and all other kinds of CG issues also made green screens a good idea."

The actors then went through their actions and, at the moment of the flow-mo sequence, each still camera took a single image, each one triggered a fraction of a second after the previous one. These pictures formed the basis of what *The Matrix* producer Joel Silver describes as "full cel animation, only with people". By using computers to create in-between frames, the FX crew could then

Going with the Flo-Mo

The Matrix refined a groundbreaking visual style that's influenced cinema ever since. We caught up with VFX supervisor John Gaeta back in 1999 to talk about his vision of the future.





"All these shots are completely virtual, all fake"

speed up or slow down the action without losing any sharpness of image. Next there's the small matter of putting the scenery into the shot – and it's here you hit the real surprise: "All the backgrounds to these shots are completely virtual – all fake.

"We've developed a technique where we record environments with maybe 10 stills. First we map these points on to the CG scenery. Then the computer can determine what any view would look like outside of the original stills. So we create these full-resolution virtual backgrounds that no one has really noticed.

"Other invisible CG stuff includes some of the skyscrapers that they jump off and lots of atmospherics and sky shots. There's also one flow-mo shot where Laurence Fishburne is shot in the leg. That entire room is computer graphics except for Laurence."

For the scene when a Huey helicopter crashes into the side of a skyscraper, the crew built a quarter-scale six-floor section of an actual Sydney building on one of the sound stages in the plush Fox Australia studios. A similarly scaled-down model of the helicopter was attached to a rig that swung it into the building. After hundreds of dry runs, they were ready to shoot.

A kilo of explosives was used to destroy the chopper and blow out the glass in the skyscraper as eight slow-motion cameras – one of them shooting at 300 frames a second – filmed the devastation. The pyrotechnics crew discovered that the only thing which shattered like skyscraper glass was the real stuff used in building construction. So when the smoke cleared, the giant 30-metre-high green screens were peppered with holes from the spray of deadly glass shards. The spectacular explosion footage of this one-chance, one-take effect was then passed to the FX team. Says Gaeta: "I'm totally of the belief that you use as much photography as absolutely possible because nothing beats the real world. So we took a photograph of the actual building and inserted the miniature section and model helicopter into it digitally recreating all the real-world reflections in the glass of the model.

"No one has been able to do flame yet with CGI, which is why we used exploding models of the building and helicopter. Flame's just so organic. Once you're in a computer effects facility rather than some producer's office, you quickly realise that dense simulations of events like water and flame are very, very difficult.

"The final shot is a sleight-of-hand. You see the real building right up to the moment of impact, at which point we did a wipe to the model, creating a soft blend of the two along the edge of the exploding glass so you can't see the join."



Star Man: Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) checks his surroundings.

Go go space ranger

TOY STORY | *Let there be Lightyear...*

Built around a joke that just keeps giving (that toys are alive and just like us), Pixar's 1995 game-changer is a film of – and about – generosity. It's a smart move, then, that the introduction of Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) should be animated by a mixture of arrogance and jealousy: the things that really make us human.



1 At the birthday party of Andy, their owner, Woody the Cowboy (Tom Hanks) and the rest of the toys are dismayed to discover they have a new colleague. "No one is getting replaced!" insists Woody.



2 Believing his own press, space ranger Buzz Lightyear patrols the bed, inspects his ruined 'ship' and looks for signs of intelligent life. No luck... until Woody pops up to say hello.



3 The toys are impressed by the newcomer and his laser; Woody is undermined. "It's not a laser, it's a little light bulb that blinks!" he protests. No one listens.



4 Buzz refuses to accept that he's a toy. Opening his wings, he promises to fly round the room with his eyes closed. "To infinity and beyond!" he proclaims, stepping off into space.



5 Bouncing off a convenient ball, Buzz "flies" through the air, loop-the-looping a Hot Wheels stunt track, then hitching a ride on a model plane hanging from the ceiling.



6 Buzz lands, triumphant, back on the bed. "That wasn't flying, that was falling... with style," says Woody weakly, but he already knows he's obsolete. **Matt Glasby**

***Toy Story* is out now on Blu-ray and DVD.**

THE BACKGROUND
Impressed by *Tron*, Disney ace John Lasseter pitched the idea of a fully computer animated movie, but was rejected. He formed Pixar, purchased by Apple's Steve Jobs in 1986, and began making Oscar-winning shorts such as *Tin Toy* (1988). Disney took note, and a tense partnership was agreed. Pixar insisted that the film should be an original story with no songs. "I can go to Disney and be a director," said Lasseter, "or I can stay here and make history." He chose wisely.

THE DEVELOPMENT
Lasseter, co-writer Andrew Stanton and co did their research in Toys"R"Us on the company credit card. Each added their own favourite toys to the mix – including the red Hot Wheels car seen here. Buzz Lightyear's wrist communicator was based on one used by Big Jim, an extraordinarily homoerotic Mattel toy. Woody was inspired by a Casper The Friendly Ghost doll from Lasseter's childhood.



THE LEADS
The revised script had morphed into a buddy film, with the clash between cowboy and space ranger, old and new, driving the plot. Pixar persuaded Hanks to sign up with an animation of Woody speaking lines from *Turner & Hooch*. "It fit," said Hanks. Billy Crystal was approached for the role of Buzz, but declined. Both Hanks and Allen became bigger stars during filming, thanks to *Forrest Gump* and *Home Improvement*.



ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS

ACTION & THRILLERS



"So, what's the choice, James: the girl or the mission?"
P70

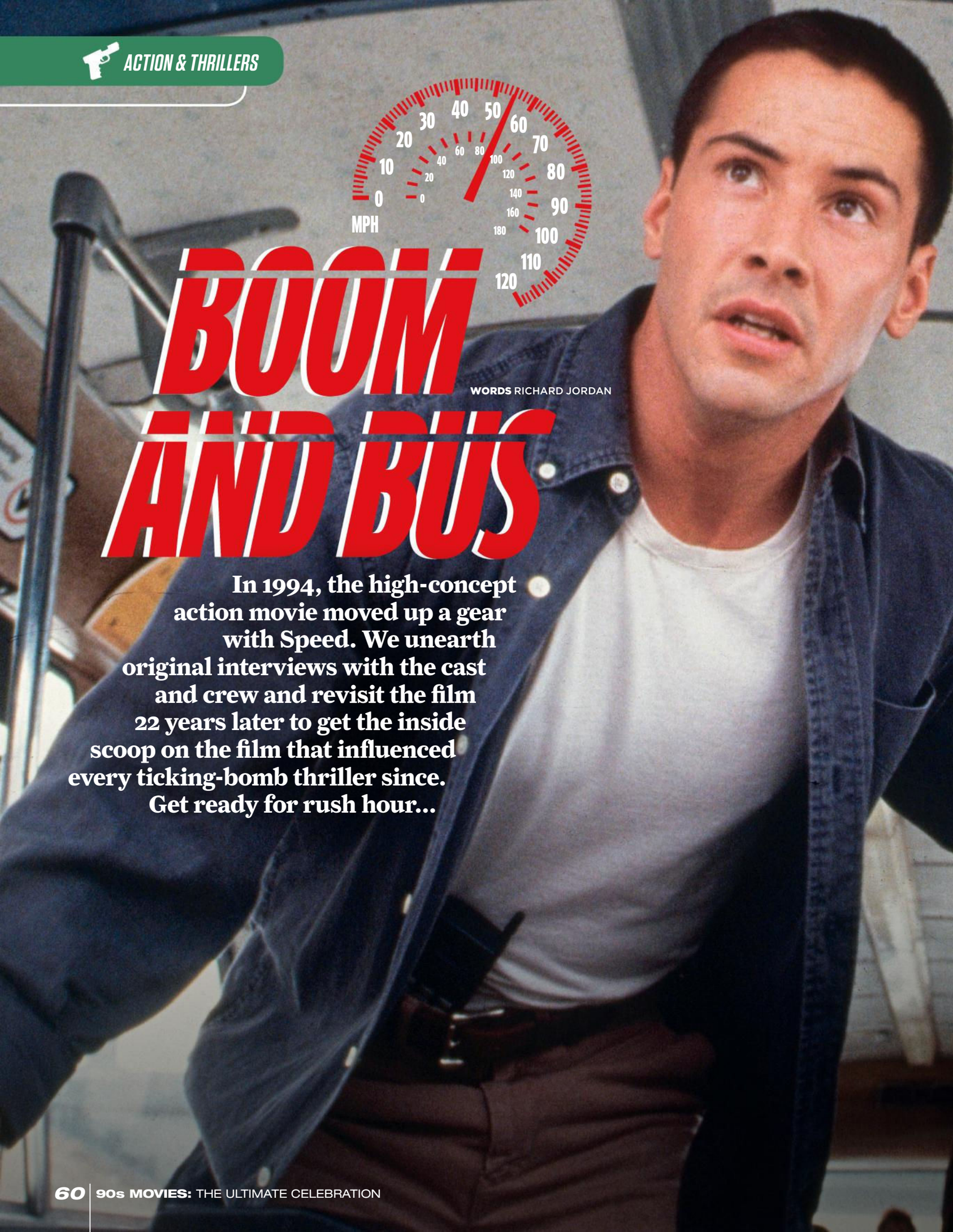
"Guts'll get you so far, then they'll get you killed."
P60



"Don't let yourself get attached to anything you aren't willing to walk out on in 30 seconds flat if you feel the heat around the corner."
P76

"I want to take his face... off."
P78

"If you want the ultimate, you've got to be willing to pay the ultimate price."
P68



BOOM AND BUS

WORDS RICHARD JORDAN

In 1994, the high-concept action movie moved up a gear with Speed. We unearth original interviews with the cast and crew and revisit the film 22 years later to get the inside scoop on the film that influenced every ticking-bomb thriller since. Get ready for rush hour...



Die Hard on a bus. That was the genius elevator pitch for *Speed* – a higher-than-high-concept action thriller that not only showcased something of a last hurrah for practical effects in a genre increasingly flooded with CG, but also turbocharged the evolution of the action hero from the muscle-bound behemoths of the '80s to the more flawed, more relatable bruisers of today.

Sending the careers of stars Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock into the stratosphere, the film also boasted Hollywood's favourite screen psychopath, Dennis Hopper, as its maniacal villain and some surprisingly witty, zippy dialogue courtesy of the then-unknown (and uncredited) Joss Whedon. Not to mention its killer central conceit. As Hopper's Howard Payne so succinctly puts it: "There's a bomb on a bus. Once the bus goes 50 miles an hour, the bomb is armed. If it drops below 50, it blows."

"I think it holds up really well," admitted screenwriter Graham Yost when we caught up with him in June 2014, an unbelievable 20 years after the film's release. "It's an action movie, but it's also a disaster movie. Instead of an ocean liner that's flipped upside-down, you have a bus with a bomb on it. It's just that the disaster is potential and it's man-made." The film's unique element of suspense powered a lot of positive word of mouth and glowing reviews, helping it to an impressive $350m box-office haul from a modest $30m budget. Not bad for a film with an untested director, from a first time screenwriter, and no big-name stars. That, of course, was all about to change...



POP QUIZ, HOTSHOT...

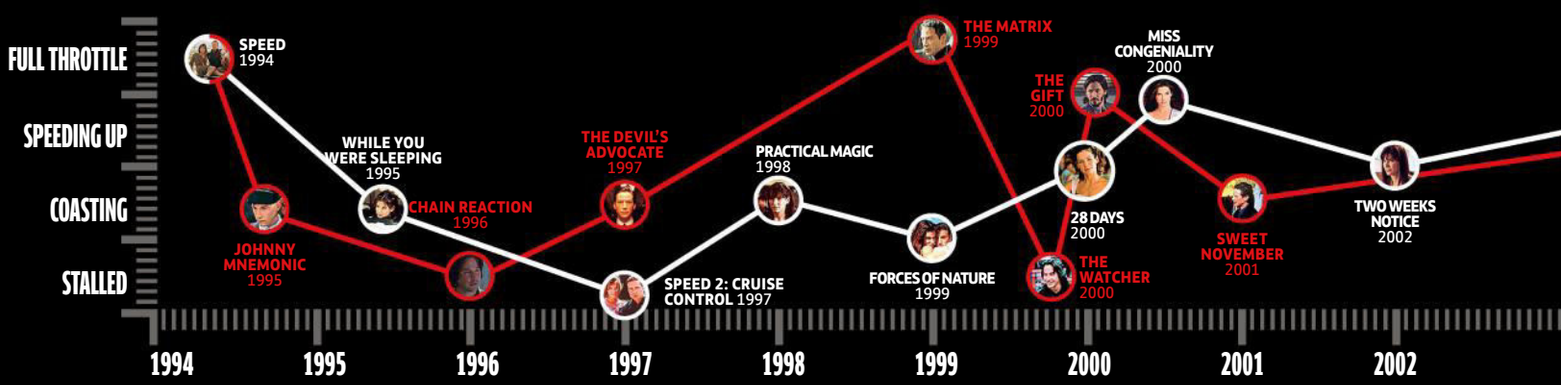
When *Speed* started shooting in and around Los Angeles in the autumn of 1993, the fortunes of its key players seemed uncertain. Keanu Reeves had impressed in the action stakes in *Point Break*, but the future lynchpin of the *Matrix* franchise was still struggling to shake off the image of his breakout role – mop-haired slacker Ted 'Theodore' Logan. Sandra Bullock, meanwhile, had provided sparky support in the likes of *The Vanishing* and *Demolition Man*, but was far from the Oscar-winning A-lister she is today. And Jan de Bont was an accomplished cinematographer who'd made a blistering calling card with *Die Hard*, but had yet to actually *direct* a movie.

Several months later, when *Speed* was unleashed in cinemas at the height of the summer season, things started to look different. "The first time I saw the whole film was at the Little Theatre on the Fox studio lot," recalls Yost. "The elevator sequence was a great way to start a movie. And then that moment when Keanu commandeers the Jaguar, smashes the door off and jumps on the bus... The thought went through my head: 'If the rest is anywhere near as good as the first 30 minutes, this is going to change the careers of a lot of people.'"

It certainly did that – establishing a bulked-up, crew-cut Reeves as an action hero for a new generation and starting Bullock on her journey to becoming the highest paid actress in Hollywood. So, 22 years later, what better time to delve back through the archives and rewind to June 1994 where, in a swanky downtown LA hotel suite, de Bont and his two young stars opened up to us about the movie that was about to send their stock soaring...

WHAT THEY DID NEXT...

Post-Speed career highlights (and lowlights) of Sandy and Keanu...









Hot ticket: (opposite) Director Jan de Bont plans a set-piece the old fashioned way; (clockwise from top) bus #2525 makes a hard turn; Payne (Dennis Hopper) takes Harry (Jeff Daniels) hostage; and the final fireball.

Speed has a hell of a high concept... What appealed to you about it?

KEANU REEVES: First of all it was the title and then, in reading the script, the situations that occurred. I've been using the word 'fantastical'... It's kind of normal life and yet heightened, and I thought it was good fun.

Jan de Bont: I always imagined that you could make an incredible movie out of these things that are so impossible in LA – like trying to go 50 miles an hour on the freeway!

There's a nice switch in that it's Sandra who's the one that does all the driving...

KR: It's a revolutionary film. [*Laughs*]

SANDRA BULLOCK: Groundbreaking. What's nice is it takes away the stigma that women are bad drivers...

JdB: That's true. They survived!

Was that what attracted you to the role?

SB: I don't make a good damsel in distress; I don't play a victim very well. The fact that it was written in such a sharp, strong way I think would have been appealing to any actress. Projects come along that are good but if I don't click with the people involved or get a good vibe from them, I'd rather not pursue it because I know my work is going to suffer because of it. On this, I just walked into the room and these two were so cute and funny that I had to do it... [*Laughs*]

More and more action movies are becoming overly reliant on special effects, often at the expense of characters and story. Is that something you tried to avoid?

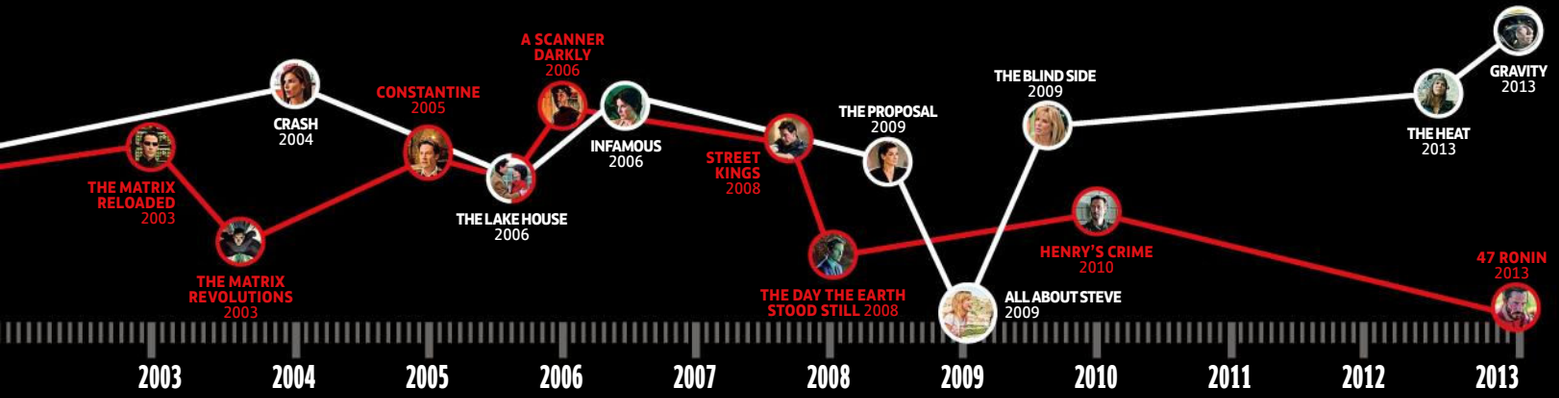
JdB: Well, after *Terminator 2* everybody thought that action movies could only be made for $100m or more and I think *Speed* proves that if you have a good story and good characters, you can make a really good action movie for a lot less than that.

"I'M NOT A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS"
SANDRA BULLOCK

This movie only cost $30m – it's only a fraction of those big movies and it could be almost as successful. You don't need all the special effects. You have to go back to basics and be inventive and creative, like the way Hitchcock used to make his movies.

Jack Traven is different to your typical hero...

JdB: I think action heroes need more vulnerability. They became so big and powerful that they lost all emotion. You don't care about those characters. I think in the action films of the future you will start to empathise with your →





Fast lane: Jan de Bont discuses a scene on set with Keanu Reeves.

"I WANTED THE AUDIENCE TO BE THE PASSENGERS ON THE BUS. I WANTED A NON-STOP TRIP" JAN DE BONT

actors a lot more than you used to and that, I think, is a great advantage; a great plus.

KR: With all the different incarnations of the script, I had questions that needed to be answered: 'Who is Jack Traven and what are we trying to do here?' Jan wanted him to be very strong and physical, but to also show emotion, imagination and intellect.

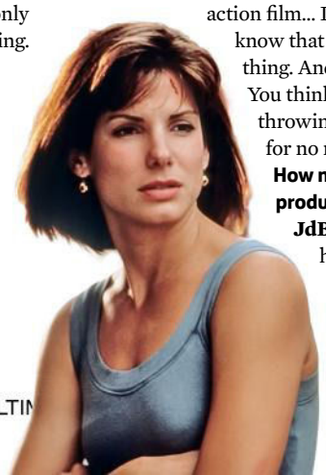
Did you shoot the film on location?

JdB: We did. Everything that's in the movie is shot in Hollywood and Los Angeles, including the train crash in front of the Chinese Theatre [*on the Hollywood Walk of Fame*]. The City was extremely helpful – the whole set was built in the centre of the street so we had to block it off for three days, and they were really very cooperative.

SB: The one thing that I realised during filming was that there's a lot of freeways and traffic in LA, but the buses don't have toilets. That makes no sense to me. That was the only problem that I had with shooting. No bathrooms anywhere...

What was it like on set – was there a particularly memorable scene?

KR: For me it was the scene where Jack and Annie are sliding out from under the bus. We shot that two days in a row – though it was only scheduled for one...



SB: There's a lot of pressure on that scene because we have to connect somehow and make it powerful, but it wasn't flowing the way we'd hoped. It's nice when someone's in tune with you enough to go, 'OK, we both know it's not working, let's not force it.' We went to Jan and he said, 'Let's just start it again tomorrow.' You have that guilt of knowing that you delayed production a day but when we got there the next morning after having talked about it, it just worked. You can't fake your way through things like that. You rarely work with actors who are open to improvisation – they like to stick to the script because it's safe. I don't like safety. It makes me stale. Luckily, Jan was fine about it. I've worked with first-time directors, and Jan is not a first-time director! For somebody to trust us enough to just let us do what we had to do in order to make a small emotional scene work in an action film... It was a really great day when you know that everybody's fighting for the same thing. And when I saw the film, it translated. You think, "Thank God, I'm not just throwing a temper tantrum and pouting for no reason!" [*Laughs*]

How much did the script change during production?

JdB: The first time I read it I already had a pretty clear idea what I could make out of it, but we changed it quite dramatically. There were so many different drafts at one point it drove me crazy. The bad guy was killed a lot earlier in the old version, for instance, and I didn't want him to get killed till the very last moment. A lot of scenes that are in the movie right now – like the gap scene, part of the airport scene and the [*climactic*] subway sequence – weren't in the original script. I added a lot of those new scenes because I wanted it to be an absolutely non-stop trip. I wanted the audience to be like the passengers on the bus, to make the same trip with them. That's what I was trying to do – to make the script into a really exciting movie.

Keanu, how do you feel about the new action hero tag that you're getting labelled with?

KR: I guess it's something that's just come around with the nature of the film. I mean it is an action picture. But I have no real ambition to become an 'action hero'. I don't know what will happen in the future, but I guess *Speed* has helped with work – my managers have received a few scripts and we're going through them... Hopefully I'll have the opportunity to act in an interesting, entertaining, mainstream film.

There's a sequel in the works – would you want to revisit these characters?

KR: We'll get to have that sex now, right?

SB: From the bus to the bed!

KR: I don't know. If this film does well, I think Fox has an ambition to work with these characters again. I enjoyed working with Sandra and we got along very well. For me, it would really depend on where I am in life and the script.

JdB: I'd be interested, but not necessarily to get back on the bus. I'm fed up with the bus!





Top gear: Jack Traven (Reeves) makes a call and (above) the subway car set-piece, filmed on Hollywood Boulevard.

SB: No bathrooms...
JdB: I'd like to work with these two again, though. They're such a unique pairing. It was fantastic...

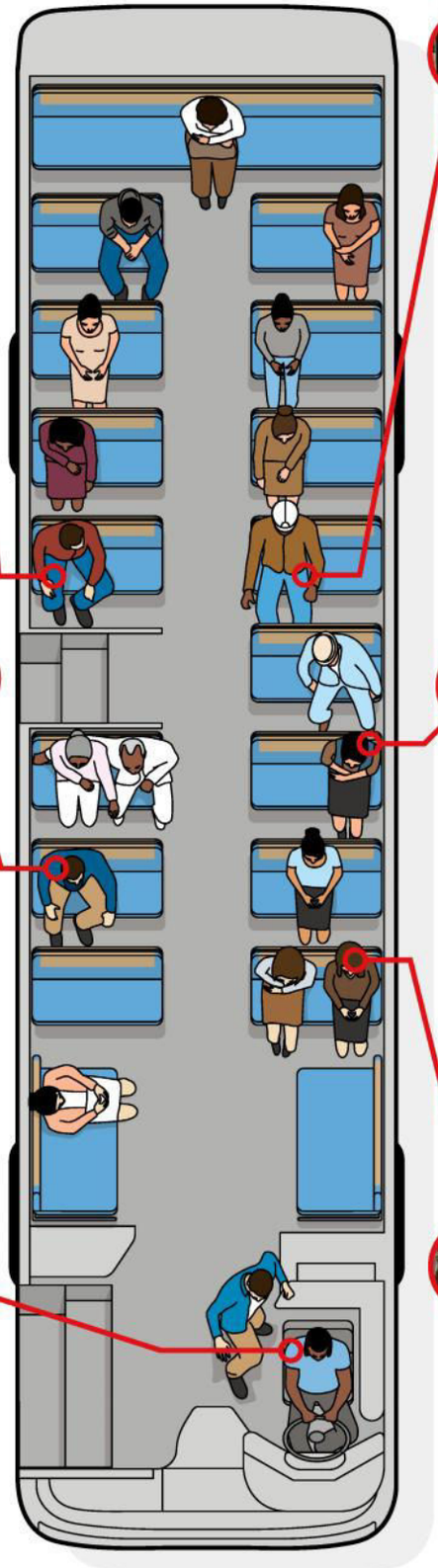
TWENTY YEARS LATER...

Of course, there was a sequel, albeit one that stopped the fledgling franchise dead in its tracks... The disastrous *Speed 2: Cruise Control* reunited Bullock and de Bont on board a runaway liner in 1997, though Reeves – declining to return because he didn't like the script (in hindsight, one of his better career choices) – was replaced by new hero Jason Patric. Also absent was Yost, who wasn't asked to return and only received a 'characters by' credit. "I wasn't invited to a party I didn't want to go to," says the *Speed* scriptwriter. "Part of me was pissed that I didn't get asked to do it. But at the same time, I thought the idea was mistaken. I didn't think there was anything exciting to the basic concept..."

If anything, the second film's biggest mistake was trying to follow the 'bigger is better' philosophy of sequel making. The success of the original film was undoubtedly down to its fiercely simple yet effective bomb-on-a-bus →

ALL ABOARD

Bus #2525 was home to a melting pot of Los Angeles locals who found themselves on the commute from hell. We take a closer look at Speed's eclectic ensemble cast...



DAVID KRIEGEL (TERRY)



After playing mop-headed teen Terry, Kriegel took various bit-parts in TV shows like *Charmed* and *The New Adventures Of Superman*, but hasn't acted since 2005. He now co-owns a children's dance school with his wife in California.

CARLOS CARRASCO (ORTIZ)



After starring as working-class hero Ortiz (aka 'Gigantor'), Carrasco made a career out of videogame voice acting (*Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Resident Evil 4*) as well as TV bit-parts in *CSI* and *Parks And Recreation*.

ALAN RUCK (STEPHENS)



Perhaps the most recognisable of the bus ensemble, Ruck – who played self-proclaimed 'tourist' Stephens – is still best known for playing good pal Cameron in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and as a regular on long-running political sitcom *Spin City*.

NATSUKO OHAMA (MRS KAMINO)



Once the timid Mrs Kamino, Ohama has since starred as 'Cannibal Woman' in *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* and has popped up in small roles in various TV shows, including *Nip/Tuck* and *The Mentalist*.

HAWTHORNE JAMES (SAM)



The heroic bus driver who takes a bullet in the line of duty, James went on to take small parts in *Se7en* and *Amistad*. Since then he's stuck to small-screen guest roles in the likes of *ER*, *Stargate* and, most recently, sitcom *Workaholics*.

BETH GRANT (HELEN)



Grant played highly-strung Helen, i.e. the crazy lady who tries to sneak off the bus and ends up under the wheels. She's built up an impressively varied CV of supporting credits since, including *Donnie Darko*, *The Artist* and *No Country For Old Men*.



Front seat driver: Annie (Sandra Bullock) takes the upper hand in *Speed* as well as (below) the steering wheel.

narrative. That idea was developed by Yost as early as the mid '80s, when the writer first saw the Jon Voight and Eric Roberts-starring thriller, *Runaway Train* [*1985*]. "The thing was they couldn't get to the brakes – they couldn't stop the train," he remembers. "It was hurtling through the wintery Alaskan landscapes and they just can't stop it. I came out of it thinking, 'That was pretty good. But it would have been much better if it was a bomb instead of their inability to get to the brakes. It'd be even better still if it was a bus...'"

Yost wrote an entire screenplay – his first feature, no less – on spec, before teaming up with producer Mark Gordon to shop it around the studios. Paramount bought the script in August 1991, where it fell into development hell before being put back on the market. A young Fox exec read the script in late 1992 and lobbied his bosses to buy the rights. The rest, as they say, is history... "It started to pick up momentum pretty quickly," remembers Yost, whose script was subsequently given to another writer to redraft. Unfortunately, Yost wasn't happy with the result... "It was a bad draft," he reveals. "It was horrible for me to read. The project had been ruined. It lacked the humour, it lacked the zip that I was going for."

Yost was brought back on board to bend the new script into shape, before it was passed on to a talented young writer to polish. Enter Joss Whedon, who'd recently impressed the studio with his zinger-filled action comedy, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*... "Joss had a big, big involvement," confirms a candid Yost, graciously giving the future *Avengers* architect his dues. "When I read his draft, I had not just a huge sigh of relief, but a genuine feeling of joy because Joss is a very entertaining and fun writer. He just gets it. There was stuff that I was reaching for in terms of character and comedy that he just elevated and nailed. Very little of my dialogue remains in the film. What does remain is the story and the structure and the characters."

Thanks to the stringent rules of the Writer's Guild of America, Yost did eventually receive sole credit for the screenplay, even though it was ultimately taken out of his hands. It's not as though he was completely cast aside once the film started shooting though, with young director Jan de Bont regularly inviting him down to the LA-based set. "Our relationship was really pretty good," remembers Yost. "Jan was the cinematographer on *Die Hard*, which had a pretty profound effect on writers of action of that period. It certainly did for me. I love that movie. I thought the characters were great, the action was great, the humour was wonderful. That sense of containment – it all takes place in a single place. One of the jokes about *Speed* was that it was sold as *Die Hard* on a bus. A couple of years later, one of the associate producers was sent a script by an agent who said, 'You'll love this – it's like *Speed* in an office building!' He said, 'Wouldn't that just be *Die Hard*?'"



The two worked closely together on bringing the film's incredible action to life, including its most memorable set-piece. Faced with a gaping hole in an under-construction freeway but unable to stop for fear of triggering the bomb, Reeves's cop Jack Travers encourages Bullock's driver Annie to floor the vehicle, making an impossible leap over the chasm... "Jan said, 'I want there to be something towards the midpoint of the movie where it looks like all hope is lost – a metaphorical brick wall,'" explains Yost. "That became the bus jump. It violates many of the major laws of physics. But Jan shot it with such brio and zest and excitement and suspense, that it works. You bought it."

Although the jump sequence was partially helped out with digital trickery ("The bus was not jumped over a gap," Yost reveals, "it was just jumped over part of the freeway and then the gap was removed with CG..."), the majority of *Speed*'s action sequences were filmed entirely 'in camera' – something that Yost got to experience first hand. "I would mostly go down to the set for the big stunts," says Yost. "I was there when they blew up the first bus in Santa Monica. We were standing in the cafe across the street, and you could feel the heat from the explosion. There's the shockwave of air moving. I was there for the subway car shooting out of the ground on Hollywood Boulevard. And for the big one: I was there for the bus jump. That was the most remarkable one because that was on a completely empty section of freeway in Los Angeles. I am nostalgic about the old days. You used CG to do things that were otherwise impossible, but today there would be a real inclination to do all the stuff that was done practically with CG. There's an energy and musicality to practical effects, and that was also part of Jan's shooting style."

As well as getting the action right, the

"KEANU KNOWS WE WENT TO TOM HANKS, TOM CRUISE AND WESLEY SNIPES FIRST"
GRAHAM YOST

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Tall order: Behind the scenes of the film's final showdown.

casting was key to selling the film's more, erm, 'fantastical' (as Reeves puts it) elements. "Everything changes," laughs Yost of the evolution of Jack Travers. "Keanu knows we went to Tom Hanks, Tom Cruise, Woody Harrelson, Wesley Snipes and a bunch of people first. In my mind when I was first writing him, the hero had been injured in that first explosion during the opening sequence. That was my vision of this troubled, pill-popping guy. And then we just got cleaner cut. When we met Keanu, we were really struck. He drove up in a motorcycle. He already had the cool short haircut. He's well over 6ft and he's a strapping guy. There's a straightforwardness about him, and that came through in his acting." With Bullock, the process was more simpler... "She was cast pretty quickly," recalls Yost. She's funny and she's pretty and she's a really good actor, and there was just that feeling that she was ready to pop."

With two bright young things cast in the hero roles, the filmmakers went with a much more experienced option for their nemesis – the late, great Dennis Hopper... It was still a bold casting choice though – remember, these were the days before the likes of Jeff Bridges and James Spader got cast as the big bads of multi-million dollar comic-book franchises... "It was sort of a late change in the summer before production to make Howard Payne the bad guy from beginning to end," says Yost, whose original villain was ultimately revealed to be Jack's partner Harry Temple (played by Jeff Daniels in the film). "My concern about that was I don't usually like situations where the good guy and the bad guy only have a relationship over the phone. I like it better if there's something between them. But when you cast Dennis Hopper and you get America's most lovable and favourite psychopath, we're clean. There's *Apocalypse Now* and his amazing work there, and what he did on *Blue Velvet* as Frank Booth, one of the greatest bad guys in the history of film. He just had that Hopper delivery. It was utterly captivating."

Spectacular practical effects done on a budget. Two fresh-faced leads up against a veteran character actor known for his quirks. One thing's for sure: *Speed* wasn't your typical summer movie... "It wasn't a conventional blockbuster," Yost agrees. "It didn't have a huge cast. It was a film that people felt that they discovered. Fox knew that and that's why they did previews around the country before it officially opened, just to build up the word of mouth. It became one of those movies that people would tell their friends about. It really had that sense of a special film: it wasn't something they were being sold, it was something that they found."

So, with fellow '90s actioner *Point Break* recently undergoing the remake treatment does Yost think *Speed* might be next for a second go round? "Well, it's not *Citizen Kane*!" he laughs. "But I don't know what you'd want to do that would be different. Mark Gordon and I still talk: 'Is there a *Speed 3*? Is there a reboot in the franchise?' We haven't landed on anything. But if someone else did it, I would certainly want to go to the premiere."

CREDIT CHECK

Joss Whedon scribbled a lot of Speed's eventual dialogue, but he's not the first writer in Hollywood to go uncredited. We look at four other tinkered stories and their unlikely script doctors...



LETHAL WEAPON 3 1992

Doctored by: Carrie Fisher

Once called "one of the most sought-after doctors in town", the *Star Wars* star (who also did script work on *Outbreak* and *Hook*) was brought in to beef up Rene Russo's character. "I'm a good script doctor because I respect the original tone," she says. "I write good love scenes and I write good women."



WATERWORLD 1995

Doctored by: Joss Whedon

Perennial uncredited writer Whedon (see also: *The Getaway*, *Twister* and *X-Men*) was flown out to the set of Kevin Costner's titanic misfire to try to salvage the script... "There was no water in the last 40 pages," says Whedon. "I'm like, 'Isn't the cool thing about this guy that he has gills?'"



SHE'S ALL THAT 1999

Doctored by: M Night Shyamalan

The same year he gave us *The Sixth Sense*, Shyamalan "ghost wrote" this soppy teen romcom – a claim disputed by the film's credited writer R Lee Fleming Jr. "He did more than a polish," reckons Jack Lechner, who developed the film at Miramax. "He did a solid rewrite. He made it deeper."



THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM 2007

Doctored by: Tom Stoppard

Stoppard, the Oscar-winning *Shakespeare In Love* scribe and celebrated playwright, took a stab at redrafting Tony Gilroy's problematic third *Bourne* screenplay. "I wrote a script for Paul Greengrass," says Sir Tom. "Some of my themes are still [*in there*], but I don't think there's a single word of mine in the film."



Call of duty: Johnny Utah (Keanu Reeves) on the tail of Bodhi (Patrick Swayze).



Stranger than fiction

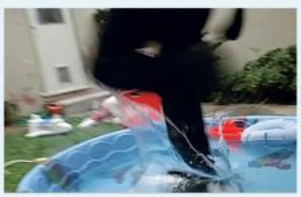
POINT BREAK | *The head of the Ex-Presidents leads a pounding foot chase in Kathryn Bigelow's groundbreaking thriller.*

Surfing, sky-diving, bank robbing and one hell of a chase through the suburbs of Santa Monica: Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* was, as the poster screamed, '100% adrenaline!' from the off. Twenty years ago, a relatively unknown Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze, a star rising high on the stellar success of *Ghost*, pulled on their wetsuits and rode a colossal wave of action, bromance and beachbum philosophy. Derided as mindless, *Point Break* cracked on to become a cult classic, gave rise to the popularity of surfing and even spawned a curious piece of theatre, *Point Break Live!*, where an audience member is invited onstage to read the part of Johnny Utah. Bigelow would go on to win the Oscar for *The Hurt Locker*, further demonstrating her power as an explosive directing talent, and prompting a timely reappraisal of this gnarly movie. **Ali Upham**

***Point Break* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- The idea for the story was an article about Los Angeles as the bank robbery capital of the US.
- Screenwriter W Peter Iliff was still waiting tables when he wrote the first draft, for which he was paid $6,000. Columbia Pictures and Ridley Scott snapped it up, but it would be a four-year wait before the option passed and the film was made by James Cameron and director Kathryn Bigelow.
- Johnny Depp and Charlie Sheen were considered for Johnny Utah before it went to Keanu Reeves.
- Swayze and Reeves had doubles for the big swells, but Bojesse Christopher and John Philbin did the big wave shots themselves.





"The beauty of that sequence is the simplicity. It's not complicated but you get the visceral part of it."

Peter Abrams, producer





"I was attracted to it from the beginning because I loved the paradox. You have these two worlds in opposition to each other. It's the system vs the anti-system."

Kathryn Bigelow, director





"This was one of those movies that had something special written all over it from day one."

Patrick Swayze, actor

POGO STICK
The sketchy, heart-pumping camerawork was achieved using a lightweight camera attached to a pole called a pogocam. There was a wire loop on top of the camera so the operator James Muro could get an idea of what was in the frame.

UNKNOWN STUNTMAN
"I'm glad I didn't do it!" was Swayze's response to the footchase after seeing it for the first time, which says a lot considering he would always do the stunt whenever possible. He was busy promoting *Ghost* at the time so stuntman Scott Wilder pulled on the Reagan mask.

ONE WITH EVERYTHING
Bodhi's name comes from bodhisattva, a Buddhist term for a heroic, enlightened being who also seeks enlightenment for those around them. Totally rad...

CUNNING STUNTS
Special weekenders were held for the actors by Glenn R Wilder – all desperate to swing their cojones – to work on their fight skills and stunts. Diving through plate glass was reserved for the pros though, with Keanu's double Pat Banta stepping in here.

RUFF TREATMENT
In a piece of genius instant arming, Bodhi grabs an American Pit Bull Terrier and hurls it at Utah. It's only right that the dog should be as hard as nails, too...

ALL STAR
Johnny's dodgy knee got 'nuked in the last quarter' at the Rose Bowl when he was playing college football. This isn't actually the first time Reeves has been a star Quarterback from Ohio State: see *The Replacements*.





"It wasn't such an easy sell for Kathryn. 'No, really, he can be an action guy.' It was such a leap of faith. Thank you, Kathryn! You changed my life!"

Keanu Reeves, actor





"It's not about surfers, it's not about robbing banks, it's about one kid, this kid named Utah finding a passage from boyhood to manhood."

Gary Busey, actor

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS



GOLDE

F

ENEYE

In 1995 a new Bond, a new director and a new (female) M revived a wounded franchise. We debrief with Pierce Brosnan and Martin Campbell to discover how 007 was brought in from the cold...

WORDS NEIL SMITH

Fittingly for a movie intended to relaunch a series after six years in the doldrums, the 17th installment of the James Bond series begins with a leap into the unknown. A dark-haired guy in combat fatigues sprints along the lip of an immense concrete dam, stopping to hook one end of a bungee chord onto a railing and the other onto his boot. As he stands on a ledge, the camera swoops over his head to reveal the yawning 700ft drop below. He pauses for an instant, long enough for us to register the wind and for our hearts to relocate into our mouths. And then he jumps, two additional cameras recording his descent as we look on, dumbstruck.

The heroics belong to stuntman Wayne Michaels (see box on page 74 for more), who in reality did the jump twice in order to give director Martin Campbell the footage he needed. For new 007 Pierce Brosnan though, there would be no second chances. "We've got one shot at this so we had better not screw it up," he told reporters during filming. "The stakes and the expectations are high and it is important to get it right." "There'd been a lot of negative press before the film was released, with people asking 'Is Bond washed up?'" recalls Campbell. "We all looked at each other and said, 'If we don't get this right, the series is dead.'"

How had Her Majesty's most durable Secret Serviceman come to such a pretty pass? One could blame 1989's *Licence To Kill*, a violent, grim-faced affair that earned an unwelcome 15 certificate in the UK – the first Bond movie to do so – and whose poor performance in the US caused much head-scratching at Eon HQ. ("In making Bond a tougher character, we had lost some of the sophistication and wry humour," admitted producer Albert R 'Cubby' Broccoli. "We had to get back on to that track – back to a lighter touch, with more fun and capers like we had with the earlier Bonds.") Nor did it help when Eon got embroiled in a lengthy legal wrangle over a proposed MGM/UA buy-out, →

the small print of which would have seen the Bond movies' international TV rights sold off for a song had parent company Danjaq not taken action. ("There was a six-year gap after the Dalton one because the man who was running MGM, Giancarlo Parretti, was a crook," Campbell tells us during promotion for *Green Lantern*. "Legally they couldn't make Bond – they weren't allowed to.")

Above and beyond this, however, was a growing groundswell that Ian Fleming's hero had had his day and should be swept away with the rest of the Iron Curtain. What role could this Martini-swigging, tuxedoed relic play in a cinema landscape dominated by the slicker likes of *Die Hard*, *Lethal Weapon* and *Terminator 2*? "I believe James Bond will always have an audience out there," said Broccoli bullishly. "He was never going to stomp into *Terminator* territory." But with the geriatric mogul obliged to take a back seat in the family business, it would be up to his daughter Barbara and his stepson Michael G. Wilson to prove it. And before they could address 007's future, there was one little issue. Namely, who should play him?

SEARCH PARTY

Throughout the legal impasse, Timothy Dalton was contracted to return to Bond and, as late as 1993, was fully expecting to do so. In April 1994, however, the Welsh actor accepted the inevitable, graciously announcing his departure from the role and clearing the way for another man to take over. Several candidates were reportedly considered, among them Hugh Grant, Liam Neeson and French thesp Lambert Wilson. Having been denied the part in 1986 though, the role appeared to be Brosnan's to lose. "Friends would send notes saying I had been nominated by this poll or that poll," the Irishman recalls. "But I did not let it get to me. The last time had been such an unpleasant experience, I didn't dare hope in case it crashed down around my ears again."

Next to losing his first wife, *For Your Eyes Only* Bond girl Cassandra Harris, to cancer in 1991, missing out on *The Living Daylights* – the high price of having his dormant *Remington Steele* contract revived by NBC – had been one of the most painful episodes in Brosnan's life. As far as Campbell was concerned, though, getting the actor on the second time of asking was probably the best outcome. "I think Pierce is actually much better now than he would have been then," said the native New Zealander, who got the *GoldenEye* gig off the back of his 1994 film *No Escape*. "I saw the 1986 screen tests he did and he looked unbelievably young. We did the normal worldwide search but in my heart of hearts I felt it absolutely had to be Pierce. There really was no one else."

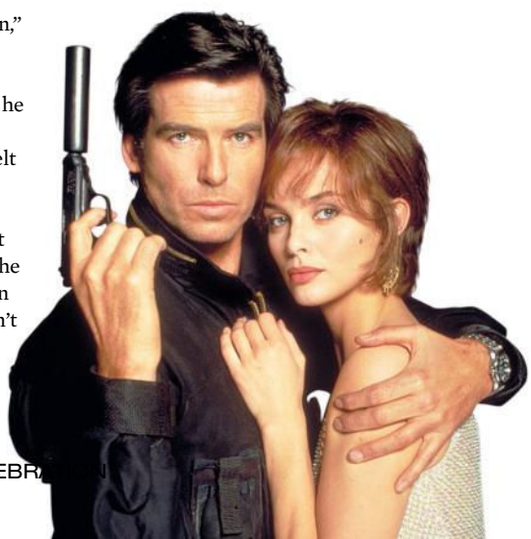
Unveiled to the world's media and expectant fans on 8 June 1994, Brosnan took heart from the fact that, if anything, Barbara Broccoli was even more nervous than he was. "I realised she hadn't done one of these things before either," mused the actor, who arrived at London's Regent





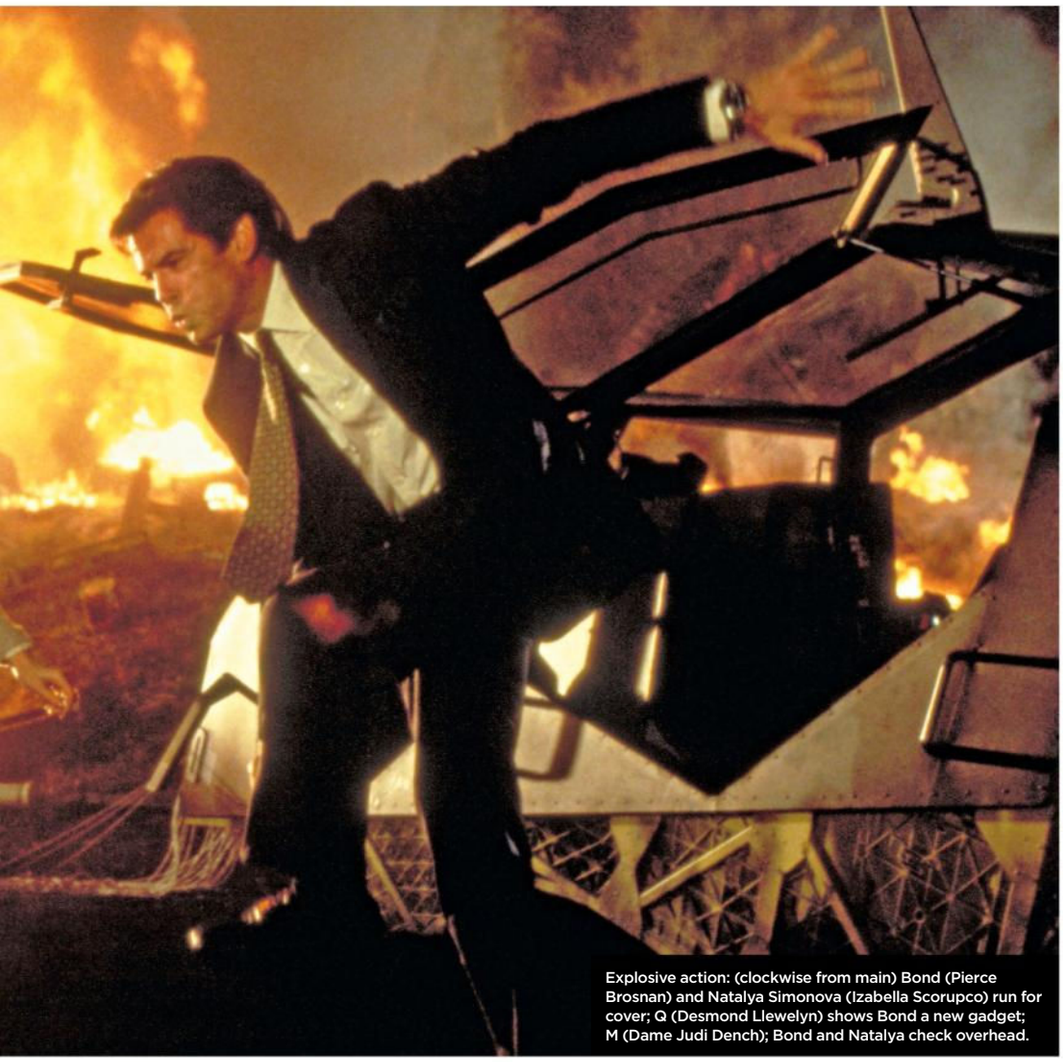
"IT ABSOLUTELY HAD TO BE PIERCE AND NO ONE ELSE"

MARTIN CAMPBELL



Hotel with the very un-Bond-like beard that he'd grown for an upcoming film of *Robinson Crusoe*. "Although she had worked on Bond films for years, Cubby had only handed over fully since the last film so we were all new to it." Stepping out from behind the curtain with the James Bond theme ringing in his ears... "everything went into slow motion. The glare of the lights, cameramen yelling... everyone wants a piece of you. All I could do was smile and try to be gracious."

As he headed back to a different hotel, Brosnan felt as if the life had been sucked out of him, not a good start for the new 007. And he didn't feel much better the following January when he showed up at the Bond set with an injured hand, its tendons severed by a towel rail snapping at his home in Malibu. "I felt such a prat making that one public," he sighs. "On the way to hospital I was thinking, 'So close to the role of a lifetime – and now this!' Every time Bond comes into my life, it comes with a lot of drama." But there was an upside: his accident allowed all his dialogue scenes to be shot before the physically demanding action. "That was very good for me," remembers the actor, who spent his first day trading barbs with Robbie Coltrane in his role as



Explosive action: (clockwise from main) Bond (Pierce Brosnan) and Natalya Simonova (Izabella Scorupco) run for cover; Q (Desmond Llewelyn) shows Bond a new gadget; M (Dame Judi Dench); Bond and Natalya check overhead.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 1996



Tom Cruise was the immediate beneficiary of *GoldenEye*'s success, his re-do of the 1960's spy series capitalising on the appetite it stoked for espionage-based excitement. Interestingly, it also features a Eurostar chase that had figured in an early *GoldenEye* draft.

AUSTIN POWERS 1997



Cometh the film, cometh the spoof. But at least Mike Myers did it with love, ensuring the Bond stylings in *Austin Powers: International Man Of Mystery* were as much homage as parody. Elizabeth Hurley, incidentally, hosts a doc on the *GoldenEye* DVD.

THE MASK OF ZORRO 1998



Having given James Bond the kiss of life, Martin Campbell promptly did the same for Don Diego de la Vega in an energetic swashbuckler that gifted Antonio Banderas his best role after Puss In Boots. Shame about the sequel though.

HARRY POTTER SERIES 2001



Eon's investment in Leavesden paid off for Warner Bros, who chose the Hertfordshire complex as the base for all eight movies in the *Potter* series. The former factory is now the studio's permanent UK home – films shot there recently include the new *Wonder Woman*.

THE BOURNE IDENTITY 2002



Brosnan was looking a tad grey around the temples by the time Matt Damon made his debut as Robert Ludlum's amnesiac secret agent. Did its success convince Wilson and Broccoli to go younger and make Daniel Craig a Bourne-like Bond?

burly Russian arms dealer Valentin Zukovsky. "It gave me a sense of the character."

One of those scenes contained the film's most quoted line of dialogue: the one where Dame Judi Dench dubs him "a sexist, misogynist dinosaur". "When we were writing *GoldenEye* we were dealing with the end of the Cold War and post-Soviet Europe," remembers Bruce Feirstein, one of four screenwriters who worked on the script. (The other three were Jeffrey Caine, Michael France and Kevin Wade, whose contributions were commemorated by having Joe Don Baker's CIA agent named after him.) "So the question became, 'How do we update this; how do we modernise it?'" Feirstein's idea was to make M female, a gender re-assignment that reflected the then-recent elevation of Stella Rimington to MI5 chief. "I was somewhat dubious," concedes Wilson. "But when Barbara brought Judi Dench in, I thought, 'Wow, we've got a great opportunity here.'"

"I was absolutely delighted when I got the call," said Dench. "I've been a huge Bond fan for years, and Bernard Lee [*keeper of the M flame from* Dr No *in '62 through to* Moonraker *in 1979*] was a great friend of mine. I can now refer to myself as a Bond woman, and will indeed for the rest of my career."

A DAME TO KILL FOR

In retrospect, there may have been an element of stunt casting about Dame Judi's debut. Yet there is no denying her involvement gives *GoldenEye* an added frisson, augmenting the traditional testiness of the Bond-M badinage with a combative, trenchant charge and a teasing undercurrent of sexual tension. "Casting such a distinguished actress in the role was an inspired idea," said Broccoli Sr. "I'm a little more enthusiastic about this than I was when a couple of writers suggested we make Dr No a monkey."

A new James Bond, a female M, a Kiwi behind the camera – how else could Barbara and Michael tinker with the formula? Well, they could always build a new studio – a bold move made necessary by Pinewood's inability to fulfil its traditional role as 007 base.

A recently vacated Rolls-Royce factory at Leavesden Aerodrome near Watford in Hertfordshire offered a workable alternative, its 530,000 square feet of interior space providing enough room for five soundstages, a special effects stage plus much more besides. "I think in about eight weeks we had snapped it into order," reveals production designer Peter Lamont. "Here was a derelict factory waiting to be made into something where you could shoot a film, and we did it." Not only that, but Leavesden also came with a gigantic backlot and a still functional runway – useful for an opening sequence which sees Brosnan in hot pursuit of a pilotless aeroplane on a stolen motorbike.

Said backlot also came in handy after the producers made perhaps the biggest call of the *GoldenEye* shoot – to scrap its plans to film an action-packed tank sequence on location in St Petersburg and do the lion's share back at Leavesden. "In retrospect it was probably the single best decision we took," nods Campbell. "Negotiation was a long process; there was a hell of a lot of red tape. And even if you got permission, it didn't mean anything."

One scene was a case in point – an elaborate stunt sequence that the mayor of St Petersburg's wife had called to a halt on the mistaken belief that the fake timber the crew had obliterated was priceless Leningrad masonry. ("It was so worrying for the whole unit, the associate →



Precarious position: rogue Agent 006 Alec Trevelyan (Sean Bean) battles wth 007.

CLOSE UP

From the barrel roll in *The Man With The Golden Gun* to Rick Sylvester's parachute jump in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the Bond pictures have always gone the extra mile when it comes to stunts. Even by those standards though, Wayne Michaels' plummet off Switzerland's steel rod-studded Verzasca Dam – the highest bungee jump attempted from a fixed structure – required a special leap of faith.

"I had to do a perfect swallow dive off the top of the dam from 700ft," explains the British daredevil. "I had to hold this position while hitting an area in space that would enable me to track away from the wall and limit my chances of hitting it. We had been waiting to get the shot for two weeks, because of problems with light, so the tension is extraordinary. You're reaching terminal velocity, you're trying to keep away from the wall and you're trying to keep out of the way of 20st of rope that's below you that will kill you if you get entangled with it."

Not only that, but in order for the shot to work Michaels had to tug a gun out from his jacket before being pinged back in the opposite direction. "I had milliseconds to whip this gun out," he says. "But the vision I had was of Martin screaming at me if I hadn't done it. My mind was made up; I didn't care. Whatever happened I was going to get that damn gun out..."

producer booked seats on the plane to bring the whole crew home," remembers Lamont.)

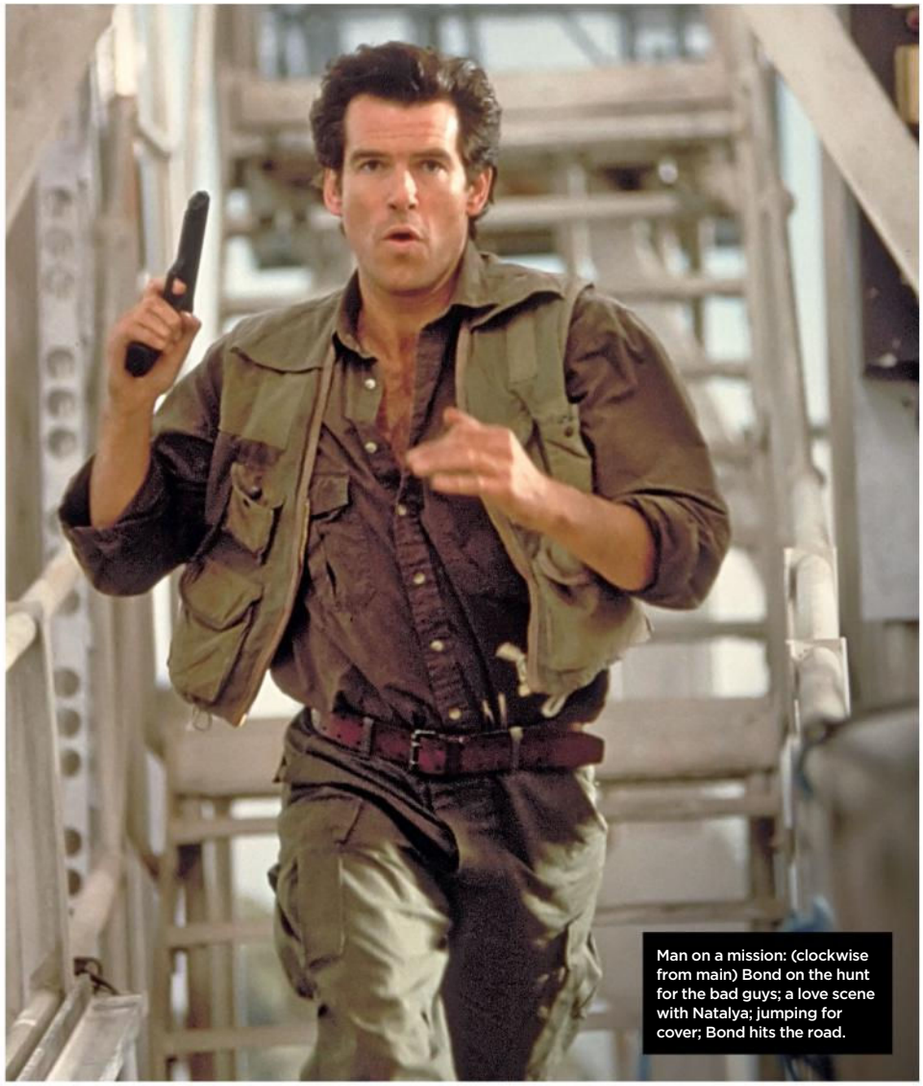
The final straw was a demand that the film pick up the tab for any damage a 36-tonne tank might wreak on the city's fragile infrastructure of gas pipes and water mains, a proviso that could have seen Eon saddled with costs running into the millions. "The risk was too much," sighs Barbara Broccoli. "We had to come to terms with the fact that perhaps our expectations had become too great." Armed with an extra $500,000 of MGM money, Lamont set about making a perfect replica of a St Petersburg street back in Blighty – a gargantuan feat completed in record time. "It was six weeks and four days from the first piece of tubular steel to the first unit shooting outside," says the *Titanic* Oscar-winning designer. "I consider it a bit of a triumph that we did this and also had an Easter break."

TANKS GIVING

"The tank chase was a suggestion from Chris Corbould," says Campbell, referring to the special effects man whose stellar work on *Inception* saw him win his own Oscar. "With Bond you always try to do something no one's ever done before." In a film notable for the amount of vehicles 007 flies, drives and rides in, this hugely entertaining sequence is a particular highlight. It also contains what would go on to become one of Pierce's signature moves: the urbane tie-straightening that would surface four years later in *The World Is Not Enough*. So, too, would the chainsaw-dangling helicopters that could have featured in *GoldenEye*'s post-credits car chase had Michael France had his way. ("I wrote a script that had different action moments that the producers put in the bank," said the screenwriter, who admits to being a touch aggrieved he only received a story credit.)

Throughout the various script mutations, one element remained constant – the battle between Bond and 006, a former friend turned treacherous turncoat. "When we first meet Alec Trevelyan, he appears to be a trusted ally," said actor Sean Bean of his character. "He's a highly trained Secret Service agent who has risen to the top by using his wits and his razor-sharp reactions. They are a good match – each knowing that the other can be a totally professional,





Man on a mission: (clockwise from main) Bond on the hunt for the bad guys; a love scene with Natalya; jumping for cover; Bond hits the road.

IMAGES © ALLSTAR

ruthless killer when he wants to be – and the final confrontation between them is powerful and very spectacular."

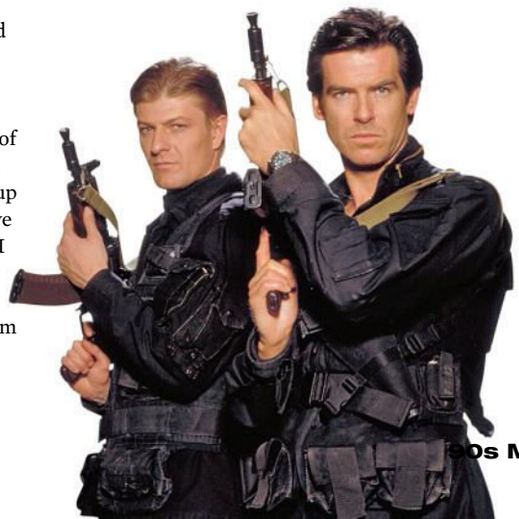
Campbell names the Sean Connery-Robert Shaw scrap in *From Russia With Love* as the inspiration for those climactic fisticuffs, a vigorous face-off in the wheelhouse of Alec's secret Cuban satellite dish (in reality the giant Arecibo radio telescope in Puerto Rico). "I always thought it was a great scene and we tried to duplicate it – heavy hitting in a confined space," reveals the director. "We wanted somebody who was Bond's equal, physically and mentally, so when they finally confront each other it's a hell of a fight."

Throw in the punishment Pierce takes from Famke Janssen's thighs – the weapon of choice of her psychopathic assassin Xenia Onatopp – and it's not surprising he was feeling a little beaten up by the end of *GoldenEye*'s five-month shoot. "I've loved being in this film, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't ready for a rest," he sighed on wrapping. "To be blunt, it's a ballbreaker."

All that had been forgotten by the time the film had its world premiere on 13 November 1995,

"I LOVED BEING IN THIS FILM, BUT IT WAS A BALLBREAKER"

PIERCE BROSNAN



followed one week later by a royal gala in London's Leicester Square in the presence of Prince Charles. He seemed impressed; were the critics? Thankfully so it seemed, *Variety* heralding the film as "the very definition of escapist fare" and Alexander Walker declaring that "Bond is back at his best" in the *Evening Standard*.

It wasn't all joyful, alas. Shortly after *GoldenEye* wrapped, its model maestro Derek Meddings succumbed to cancer, to be followed nine months later by Cubby Broccoli. Twenty-one years on though, it's hard not to see it as anything less than a tour de force: a glorious vindication of 007's bullet-proof appeal, his talent for moving with the times and the joy of giving the audience a thrilling night out. Campbell's reward? A second shot at Bond in *Casino Royale* that found him introducing another new star – Daniel Craig – to an expectant world. He is none too pleased that his good work was subsequently undone by *Quantum Of Solace*. "The truth was it was a lousy film," he kvetches. "*Casino Royale* really set the table for them and I felt they blew it completely."



Gun running: Robert De Niro and Val Kilmer find cover.

Street kings

HEAT | *Pacino and De Niro go to war...*

Michael Mann's crime opus pits cop Vincent Hanna (Al Pacino) against robber Neil McCauley (Robert De Niro), two men on opposite sides of the law, both defined by what they do and how well they do it. But this precision-tooled shootout, which sprawls across the unsuspecting LA streets, is the first time they face-off over anything stronger than coffee. As McCauley and his gang exit the bank they've just robbed, Pacino and team ambush their getaway car. Soon McCauley, Chris Shiherlis (Val Kilmer) and Michael Cheritto (Tom Sizemore) are stranded downtown, automatic weapons blazing, indiscriminate violence their only chance of escape. But something's changed in McCauley. When Chris gets winged, Neil risks his life – and everything he stands for – to drag his friend to safety. Hanna shows no such scruples, shooting Michael in the eye even as he clutches a young hostage. When the gunsmoke clears, the distinction between heroes and villains is even more blurred. **Matt Glasby**

***Heat* is available on Blu-ray and DVD.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- Mann's massive *Heat* script was first filmed in 1989 as TV movie *LA Takedown*, starring Scott Plank as Hanna and Alex McCarthur in the McCauley role.
- Producer Art Linson went after De Niro, while Mann approached Pacino. Both agreed, marking the first time they ever appeared on screen together, despite co-starring in 1974's *The Godfather: Part II*.
- In preparation, Mann patrolled with the LAPD, introducing the cast to their real-life cop/robber equivalents. Sizemore went to Folsom Prison and asked one con why he kept stealing. The answer was, "It's my job."

FIRE POWER
Between them, the actors used around 800-1,000 rounds per take. Mann insisted that they carry a realistic amount of magazines with them, and reload in real time as required.

CALLING THE SHOTS
No artificial FX could match the fearsome noise of gunfire reverberating around downtown LA. What you hear in the scene was recorded live during filming.





"I've never experienced anything like this before. *[Mann]* had us out on the range to learn how to shoot with guns. I've done that before... Only I've never done it with real bullets."

Al Pacino, actor





"The gunfire was a horrifying sound. Because of the skyscrapers it would hang in the sky for 10 seconds"

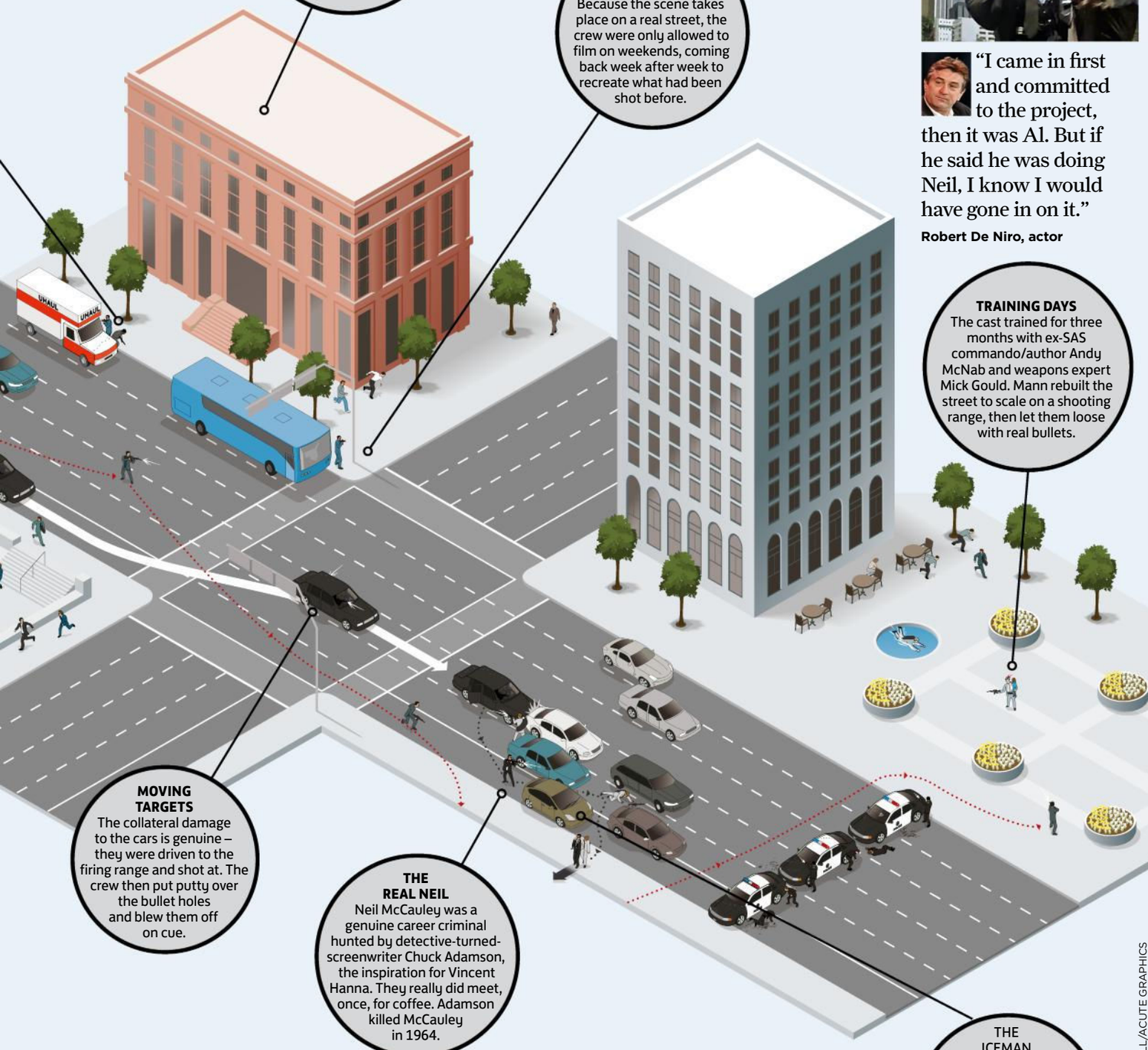
Chris Jenkins, sound mixer





"Pretty much everything we do in the film, short of actual murder, we did off-camera."

Val Kilmer, actor





"I came in first and committed to the project, then it was Al. But if he said he was doing Neil, I know I would have gone in on it."

Robert De Niro, actor





"The police are not the army. The police are used to having overwhelming force, they're not used to being assaulted by an equally well-armed, well-trained force."

Michael Mann, writer/director

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS



FACE/VALUE

It was an action thriller boasting sunburst explosions, chattering gun battles and a devilishly clever plot, as well as Nicolas Cage and John Travolta at their action-movie best. Back in 1997 we ventured on the set of Face/Off...

WORDS STEVE DALY

A property master hustles up to Nicolas Cage and puts a machine gun in his fist. "Fire in the hole, folks! This shot requires ear protection!" warns an assistant director. As stark as a charcoal drawing in black jeans, black boots, a black leather jacket, and a black-striped shirt that hugs his heavily worked-out torso, Cage cradles the gun warily. It may be loaded with blanks, but it's still a 9mm Mini Uzi, one of the more powerful firearms he brandishes at co-star John Travolta in *Face/Off*. Yet it's not the weapon's fearsome killing abilities that interests director John Woo, who left Hong Kong for Hollywood five years before and now stands at the forefront of an expatriate film-biz boom. What strikes Woo about an Uzi is its visual elegance: the coiled power of the kickback, the super bright yellow flare it emits when it's fired. So on this chilly morning in February 1997 in downtown LA, about two-thirds of the way through *Face/Off*'s fully loaded 105-day, $80 million-plus shoot, Woo has brought out the heavy artillery —the sort that made his name in his late '80s/early '90s Cantonese cult hits *The Killer* and *Hard Boiled* — to provide a guiding light. The sequence is a hall-of-mirrors shoot-out, an aptly symbolic set-piece for a story about an FBI agent, Sean Archer (played by Travolta in the movie's first 20 minutes) who infiltrates the operations of terrorist Castor Troy (initially played by Cage) by having Troy's features lasered off and grafted onto his own. But then mugless nut Troy gets loose, appropriates Archer's preserved face, and sets out to take over the good guy's job, family and identity. It's just the sort of good-mixed-inextricably-with-evil premise that brings out Woo's best instincts, not to mention two all-stops-out turns.

"Ten seconds," comes the call. Onlookers stuff small foam pellets into their ears; those closer to ground zero don clunky yellow protectors like →

airport runway crews: Cage wears tiny, fitted, flesh-coloured plugs. The camera operators and focus puller adjust their protective goggles, ready to dodge an imminent shower of flying debris. "And... action!" yells a hawk-eyed supervisor as Woo watches on a monitor tucked away in a corner of the set: there are too many safety issues involved for anybody but a weapons expert to keep an eye on the timing. As Cage steps into a rotunda surrounded by eight full-length mirrors, he sees Travolta's figure scurry through the columns – or, rather, Travolta's double, since the actor himself won't be required for several more hours. On cue, Cage raises his gun and squeezes the trigger. How to convey the sonic-boom fury unleashed in the next 60 seconds by this incongruously petite gun? Try picturing one of those '50s films of a nuclear test blast ripping the fronts off houses. The air pressure in the room surges palpably. Eyes water. The crew members closest to the action can see their T-shirts vibrating. The bass frequencies rumble through you like you're Wile E Coyote with a belly full of Acme Earthquake Pills. And that's before the demolition team begins to detonate the mirrors. As Cage blasts each glass panel in turn, the rat-a-tat-tat shattering becomes insanely percussive, like the wildest jazz drum solo played at quadruple speed and jet-engine volume (perhaps unsurprisingly, jazz is a Woo passion). The final rounds explode, all falls quiet. The boom-mike operator retracts his pole as the rotted-orange smell of hot, spent metal casings permeates the air. "Gotta wrap this gig," he says. "I think I'd like to work on a nice comedy next."

You need more firepower than ever if you want to stand out among the din of Hollywood's thriller action movies these days. And that seems to be why Cage, walking broodily around the set in semi-character between takes, is so delighted to have signed up for a tag-team assault with *Con Air*, which debuted with a $25 million first weekend in the US, and *Face/Off* which itself garnered $23.4 million. "The first time I saw a John Woo movie," says Cage, "it was like an epiphany went off in my mind. This man had taken violence and turned it into a ballet. I know we've all heard Peckinpah movies called 'ballet-like' before, but John Woo approaches a level of operatic emotion. And somehow he did it in a way that I didn't think 'body count'. I didn't feel 'exploitation'. I almost felt it was comedy, it's so over-the-top"



Cage and Travolta in two of their finest roles.

> "THIS MAN HAD TAKEN VIOLENCE AND TURNED IT INTO A BALLET"

CARNAGE WITH STYLE

Woo's distinctive style and trademark bombast reaches an apotheosis in a *Face/Off* sequence where the terrorist's four-year-old son witnesses a huge shoot-out while wearing headphones. As we watch the carnage from the child's point of view, his tape of Judy Garland singing 'Over The Rainbow' surges up to take over the soundtrack. (At least, it did in preview screenings; a copyright tangle has forced Woo to substitute a new version by Olivia Newton-John.) As the lyrics burble on about happy bluebirds, images of bullet-riddled bodies and thousands of tiny squib explosions – shards of broken glass, torn-up furniture, bullet-rent flesh – go cascading by. It's a nod, Cage says, to the first time Woo saw *The Wizard Of Oz* in a Hong Kong theatre as a young boy. Operatic? Bombastic? Suits Cage just fine, as he's anxious to take tired old action conventions and "breathe a sense of being out of control" into them. "I wanted Troy to have a more mod look with that Armani suit than the usual way we see gangsters in movies," he says. "So at the start of the movie, I've got him carrying gold guns and wearing gold cufflinks. He's sort of the Liberace of crime, is what I've done with him."

Sipping his second espresso over lunch at the Hotel Bel-Air four months later, John Travolta suddenly steps out of his smooth, royalty film star vibe to turn presidential: he's due to leave any moment for the set of Mike Nichols' *Primary Colors*. But being a man loath to rush past incidental pleasures, Travolta dallies to share his impersonation of Bill Clinton, the rather thinly disguised subject of Joe Klein's best-selling peek at the road to the White House. "I feel yer pain, son," he drawls, hilariously, then bends his two-dimensional take into a rounded, more impressionistic performance – and though he's now 43, he does it with all the show-off aplomb he had as Tony Manero strutting down a street in *Saturday Night Fever* 20 years before. "I'm half-Irish," he grins. "My mother was Irish. Deadly with imitations. Loved mimicking people. And we all grew up with this fine art of how-well-could-you-get-someone-down."

But parodying his *Face/Off* co-star's "innate Nicisms" right in front of him? That was a more worrying proposition, and so Travolta was the soul of deference when the stars began trading suggestions. "I'd absorbed a lot of Nic watching him over the years," he says. "But it was all things





John Woo points Travolta towards his next bit of ultraviolence.

I wanted permission to use." Like his idea for Castor Troy's walk. "It's a very sweeping, low-slung kind of thing," says Travolta, pulling up his cream-coloured sweater sleeves and weaving his forearms in the air to simulate the rhythm. "A saunter almost. It's very specific to Nic's natural gait. And I said if you don't mind, maybe we could use that Nic Cage cadence for the bad guy's voice, too, and I could just adapt that. You know, the way Nic slows down and enunciates and pronunciates. He's almost poetic."

Of course, talk of poetry was allowed – even encouraged – this being a John Woo production. And so were tears, a huge payload of which Cage unleashed as a sort of opening baptism to the movie. Cage couldn't start his *Face/Off* scenes till Travolta had already been before the cameras for three weeks, because he was busy wrapping *Con Air*. The first dailies he watched were of Travolta as Sean Archer, seeing his son shot down by a sniper's bullet. "He called me up," says Travolta, "and he said" – here Travolta lapses into a spot-on Cage voice – "'John, the gauntlet has fallen. I saw your scene, and I wept.' Well, when he saw it in dailies it had Louis Armstrong singing 'What A Wonderful World' on the soundtrack, so it really pointed it up. But he said, 'I'm sobbing, watching these dailies. I can't thank you enough. You've made the decision for us about the level of acting we're going to do for this movie. Now I've really got to go to work.' Hey, make my year, Nic, why don'tcha?" And with that, Travolta ambles off to work himself.

BULLET TIME

In a dubbing stage in Santa Monica, John Woo is still looping the final sound mixes for *Face/Off* with only three weeks to go until its release. The mood in the room is a mixture of ebullience and exhaustion; it's a minor miracle that *Face/Off* will dodge the bullets and make its original release date. Especially as the film only wrapped 1 April – and after a single test screening went back into production on 8 May, at a cost of $300,000, to shoot a new ending that would settle the fate of an orphaned little boy more conclusively. "It was the ending we always wanted," says Woo, a diminutive, energetic 50-year-old with a smoker's voice and a wide-eyed way of gazing through his outstretched hands when talking about a shot. He had argued with Paramount to shoot the ending two ways, but time and money ran short – so he filmed a restrained wrap-up scene with Archer. When the picture previewed in LA, says Woo, 65 per cent of the audience asked why it didn't end with the sort of resolution that Woo and the writers had first planned.

That Paramount let him put the scene right represents a major breakthrough for the director, whose entry into Hollywood politics was so rough he considered going back to Asia. He watched his first US picture, '93's *Hard Target*, get heavily re-cut by Universal (and then trimmed further to earn an R rating from the Motion Picture Association of America). "Out went the pathos," says 22-film veteran Woo. "Some people in Hollywood, they have a little misunderstanding with the audience. They usually say that all the audience cares about is the hero never dies, and the hero should have no flaws. And the hero shouldn't have tears in the eyes, they never cry. I said, 'Wow, is it true?' I didn't believe that." Instead, Woo aspires to fill his own brand of action spectacle with what he calls "the real thing". "I feel that all mankind, they all have heart," he says. "I don't think Americans have no heart." Back in the sound-mix triage room, the playback level reaches brutal heights as Woo punches up a prison riot sequence. Cage, on screen as the Archer-trapped-in-Troy's-body character, bellows, "Come on! You can do it!" to a man trying to grab a gun barrel to keep from falling to his demise over a balcony. Cage's eyes are moist and terrified at the prospect of a senseless death. The image freezes up for a moment, and there, as if caught in amber, is the world of Woo: the spray of bullets, the surge of tears.

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COMEDY

"Who needs him? I've got a vibrator!"
P88

"The odd thing about this form of communication is that you're more likely to talk about nothing than something."
P96



"Do I make you horny, baby? Do I?"
P84

"I always just envisioned the right one being someone I could see myself growing old with."
P100

"I'm just a girl. Standing in front of a boy. Asking him to love her."
P90



AUSTIN POWERS: The Spy who Shagged me

Looking back at the spy spoof that toppled the most eagerly anticipated movie ever from its top spot. Yeah baby, yeah!

WORDS
JAY MARSHALL,
CAM WINSTANLEY,
EMMA COCHRANE

"Do I make you horny baby?" Actually, no. And the yellowing tombstone teeth and matted gorilla chest hair don't exactly do it for us either... But then we are talking about a movie in which the snaffle-gobbed hero motors along in a Union Jack-emblazoned Shaguar and romps naked through the opening credits, his modesty hidden only by strategically placed objects. When it comes to *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, subtlety had the door slammed in its face on the way in.

'"Basically I'm a sexless geek," admits Mike Myers, face of both Austin Powers and Dr Evil, his Donald Pleasence-circa *You Only Live Twice*-inspired nemesis. "I have no chin. My face is pocked with acne scars and I'm five-foot-nothing. I have one of those pasty white bodies that would have given away the Allied position to German aircraft. That Mike Myers in the body of Austin Powers could be considered a sex machine is the whole joke of the movies."

It seems incredible now to recall that the world was originally slow to warm to the '60s superspy defrosted for the '90s. The original *Austin Powers* took a middling $54 million at the US box office, and only became a hit when it took almost as much again on video. But on its opening weekend stateside, the sequel – *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* – clawed in an incredible $57.4 million and became the film that sent *The Phantom Menace* tumbling from the top spot.

"It's just been an amazing experience," says Myers. "The whole movie is kind of a universal in-joke for my house. We just thought we made it for ourselves. We never thought that anybody else would like it."

The idea to give a knowing twist to the kitsch Bonds and other playboy agents of the syphilitic '60s came to Myers Eureka-style in the bathtub. "I loved that era. Everything was eroticised. You couldn't have a kettle, you had to have a sexy kettle. You couldn't just be a flight attendant, you had to be a sexy stewardess. Then one day – I think it was 1978 – it all just stopped. But not for Austin Powers."

Myers attributes the rich vein of Anglocentricity that runs through the two films →

> *"The whole movie is a kind of universal in-joke for my house. We thought we just made it for ourselves"*



Felicity Shagwell and Austin go all *Moonraker.*

"When I saw the miniature Brando playing piano with Marlon, I vowed that Dr Evil had to have a Mini-Mike"

to a form of therapy. Writing them helped him deal with the death of his Liverpudlian father. An expatriate who relocated to Canada, Eric Myers ensured that sons Peter, Paul and Mike grew up on a steady diet of imported Blighty humour that included The Goons, *Monty Python* and *The Goodies*. "My father was my inspiration and he was the ruler by which I measured the success of any joke," he continues. He thought silly was undervalued. He was a very, *very* silly grown-up and I think I am too. Because of him, I saw the value of being silly. It's life-affirming. Yet he never shared in the fame he wanted for me."

Myers' big break on stateside TV sensation *Saturday Night Live* coincided with his father developing Alzheimer's disease. And while character creations like Wayne and Garth saw Myers' standing rise, his father was fading away. "He didn't know who he was most of the time so he was unable to appreciate that I'd made it on one of his favourite TV shows," Myers recalls. "It would have meant so much to him. My dad died the Thursday before the first preview of *Wayne's World*. My mom had been a professional actress. She insisted the show must go on and that I attend all the premieres and press junkets and keep my hurt away from the cameras and the press."

After this, the critical maulings meted out to *Wayne's World 2* and *So I Married An Axe Murderer* pretty much passed him by. "I had lost interest in everything, but I owed Paramount Pictures a sequel. I didn't feel funny without my father there to act as a laugh barometer.

"Then Austin popped into my head one night. I was thinking of my father as usual and all the fun times we'd had watching the *Pink Panther* and Matt Helm movies. I created Austin Powers in memory of him. I had no idea if he'd connect with a modern audience, but I didn't really care at the time. I just wanted to do something I thought would have made my father laugh. At the first test screenings, the audiences didn't laugh that much. But the video release went through the roof."

GOLDEN GRAHAM

The other star whose ranking soared thanks to the second *Powers* outing is Heather Graham. Her showing as Felicity Shagwell, Austin's sexually rampageous CIA sidekick, demonstrates that she is equally at home with comedy blockbusters and small-scale indie fare like *Two Girls And A Guy*. She notes that Myers' wild improvisations in front of the camera are in stark contrast to his tireless and calculated groundwork: "He's got all these index cards, and he plans everything out ahead of time. He's a perfectionist about it."

The planning did go askew somewhere, however, with Myers' film boasting some of the most glaring product placements of all time (Virgin Airlines, anyone?). The warehouses of merchandise on display include everything from martini glasses and Matchbox replicas of the Shaguar to Dr Evil suits and Swedish penis enlargers (endorsed by Austin, naturally). A kids' cartoon series was also mooted. Myers remains pragmatic about all the commercialisation, the blatant cleaning-up of a character who is essentially a snaggle-toothed satyr with his brains in his Union Jack Y-fronts.

Myers explains: "Following first movie, there were thousands of angry letters complaining that there was nothing to buy. That's what New Line told me. And then they said: 'Well, we're going to do this, that, and the other.' So the big news on this movie is that there is something to buy.

"I mean, it's absurd. You write a character and then, all of a sudden you see on the news that there's a big doll launch and so you go: 'Oh, okay' I had hardly anything to do with it. I mean, I did look at them just to make sure that they weren't crappy, but that was about it."

The Spy Who Shagged Me also ups the ante on the first film's Myers incarnation quota. As well as Powers and Dr Evil, there's now Fat Bastard, a mountain of hairy latex prosthetic with a Scottish accent. The larded-up double agent, who makes off with Powers' libido, farts like a ferry funnel and has a bed scene with Ms Shagwell during which he doesn't stop munching, burbling that he's "dead sexy", or calling the Yank vixen "crap".

Designed and made by the Stan Winston Studios (they gave us *Jurassic Park*'s T-Rex), the suit gave Fat Bastard a 70-inch waistline and took Myers five hours to get into. "I'm not going to lie.

IMAGES © ALLSTAR



Vile please: Dr Evil and Mini-Me give us the (little) finger.



It wasn't exactly comfortable. But it was also some of the most fun I had in the movie. It was glorious to just be an angry pig all day, I enjoyed that immensely." And Graham's recollection of bed scenes with a spittling, sweating food mountain who munches babies for breakfast? "I think some other presence took over him when he was Fat Bastard," she quips. "The next day, when he was back to Austin, he was like: 'I'm so sorry. Please don't hate me.'"

The final Myers incarnation is Dr Evil's clone — a perfect but tiny recreation of himself played by two foot-eight actor Verne J Troyer. With matching scars, noses and even scale bald cats, the interplay between Dr Evil and Mini-Me provides the film with some of its most hilarious sequences. The inspiration, however, came from one of the biggest turkeys of the '90s.

Explains Myers: "I'm a real homebody, and my idea of a great night out is a night in watching DVDs. One of my best friends dropped by and we decided to watch *The Island Of Dr Moreau*. I thought it was a weird, forgettable movie until the miniature Marlon Brando appeared. Suddenly, I was glued to the screen when the miniature Brando was playing piano with Marlon. I vowed there and then that Dr Evil had to have a mini-Mike Myers or, as I instantly named him, a Mini-Me. I told Verne: 'You have to remember you're one-eighth Dr Evil's size, so you're compressed evil. Basically you go to the part of his heart that is very dark and black.' And he did."

With the runaway success of a second movie that's funnier and more inspired than the first, the hope was that Austin Powers' name would spawn a franchise. A third film, *Austin Powers In Goldmember*, was released in 2002, but the spec-wearing superspy has been MIA in the 14 years since.

"If somebody said that every second movie I had to make was an Austin Powers movie, I'd be very happy," admits Myers. "Once you realise that he can go on a whole bunch of adventures – like Inspector Clouseau and James Bond – it lends itself to more installments. I'd love to see Austin Powers evolve into something like the *Pink Panther* franchise." 90s



Getting ruff: Puffy (as played by Slammer) takes on Ben Stiller's Ted in *There's Something About Mary*.

Bitch slap

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

Stiller opens a can of whupass on Puffy the dog...

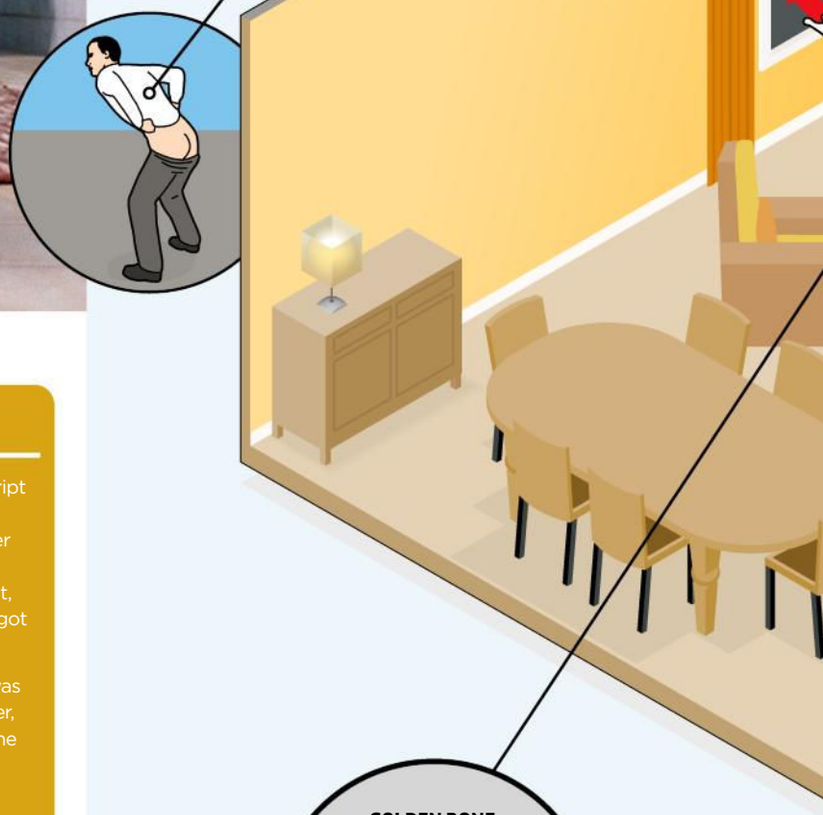
This is tasteless and heartwarming. It's 'tartwarmingless'," is how star Ben Stiller eloquently describes balls-out romcom *There's Something About Mary*. At its heart is a touching love story, giving hope to every socially awkward, borderline stalker who dreams of getting the girl. It's also got some of the crassest gags ever pulled off in a major studio picture.

It was always a punt: directing duo the Farrelly brothers, whose most recent movie is *Dumb And Dumber To*, didn't want *Mary* to go the same way as bowling flop *Kingpin*. To shore things up they hurled masturbation jokes, animal cruelty and a pair of saggy rubber tits at the script. When the producers saw cinemagoers literally rolling around in the aisles, they knew they were on their way to a $350 million phenomenon. **Ali Upham**

***There's Something About Mary* is available on DVD and Blu-ray now.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- *Mary* was a spec script written by John J Strauss and Ed Decter back in 1988. The Farrellys got hold of it, "punched it up" and got the green light.
- Initially the studio was reluctant to cast Stiller, so the Farrellys put the then-unknown Owen Wilson forward. The execs decided Stiller would actually be better, after all.
- A huge selection of model Puffys were used but it was the plaster-cast Puffy (an afterthought because they didn't want to kill the dog) that became the most iconic image. The Farrellys liked it so much they kept it.



A BUM NOTE
When Puffy flies through the window, the Farrellys couldn't get the right reaction from Magda (Lin Shaye) and Mary (Cameron Diaz), until Bobby gave them a hand; when they looked out of the window he was standing there with his arse out.

GOLDEN BONE
Stiller and dog Slammer picked up the 'Best Fight' gong at the MTV movie awards and made a spoof documentary claiming that Puffy was created by Industrial Light and Magic, accompanied by shots of Stiller writhing around in front of a greenscreen, for the dog to be added in post.





"This is one of the best sets we've ever had. In fact after it was done I was thinking of having them do my house over because it was such a dump."

Peter Farrelly, director





"A lot of people ask us if the dog was hurt while filming this and we should point out that dog was really old..."

Bobby Farrelly, director

SPEED FREAK
It is not just Puffy who's off his rocker on speed... So is Magda, and at the start of this scene she's terrorising the soft furnishings with the vacuum. The sofa was kitted out with a lever system giving Magda the apparently superhuman strength to lift it up with one hand.

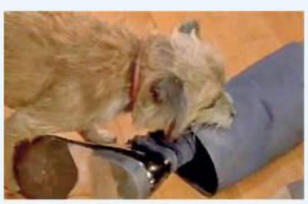
EBOOB
Magda's pendulous breasts were, unsurprisingly, a prosthetic. Actress Lin Shaye still owns them, claiming that if times ever get hard she'll flog Magda's rack on eBay.

GROWL AND BARE IT
The Farrellys were delighted with Slammer's performance, with Bobby saying the dog did everything they wanted... except actually bare its teeth. To achieve this effect an elastic band was used to show off the gnashers shortly before they were buried into Stiller's balls.

THE TWO STOOGES
The scene peaks with a Three Stooges-inspired eye poke that's swiftly pawed away by Puffy – Stiller attempts to claw his way along the floor (there are pre-made scratch marks that are briefly visible, and the hands actually belong to Josh Klausner, the second unit director).

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT PUFFY
Puffy, the border terrier who steals this scene, is actually called Slammer, and was a bitch, as opposed to the male she portrays in the film.

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS





"My goal was to make the dog real, and I thought they'd give us a normal-looking dog. But they gave us this freaky border terrier with the whacked-out hairdo."

Tony Gardner, designer





"The Puffy doll, and it's obviously a doll, was cheesy but it doesn't matter. It's funnier because we like the characters."

John J Strauss, screenwriter





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The Notting Hill Story

WORDS EMMA COCHRANE

Hugh Grant, Julia Roberts and Richard Curtis hit rom-com gold with this tale of a bookshop owner and his unlikely love affair with a Hollywood star. The makers tell us about its conception and shoot

Tuesday 27 April, 1999: Stephen Fry is on stage at the Odeon Leicester Square, London.

He has been called upon to introduce the world premiere of the latest film from the makers of *Four Weddings And A Funeral*: *Notting Hill* — or *Nuh*, as Fry likes to call it. He skips over the story (boy – played by Hugh Grant – meets most famous film star in the world – played by Julia Roberts – and falls in love) and runs through some thank yous, greeted with whoops of appreciation from those in the know. The audience has a high celeb count, particularly from the comedy world.

Outside earlier, Hugh Grant's girlfriend, Liz Hurley, has drawn an unnecessary amount of tabloid attention →

by arriving in a dress that appeared to be partly made of cling film. The star of the film, Julia Roberts, arrives in a demure pink number, and spends 10 minutes with the crowds chatting and laughing. Next day she's probably somewhat disturbed to find her tufty pits splashed all over the newspapers, while "stunna Liz" is crowned Queen Of The Premieres.

It's a scene that could have been taken from *Notting Hill* – but Julia has more resilience than the actress she plays. At the party afterwards she eschews the VIP lounge in favour of reuniting with cast and crew. Fact is, there is no VIP lounge because the celebs are happy to mix with other invitees – and that includes the press. At one surreal point it's possible to turn around and bump into not only Roberts and Grant, but also Hurley, Elvis Costello, Bob Geldof, Ben Chaplin, Neil Morrissey, Rachel Weisz and Steve Coogan, all gathered around writer Richard Curtis, who is understandably looking very pleased with himself. His film has been judged a success and would go on to top *Four Weddings* at the box office. But the journey to reach that point started a long time ago...

THE BEGINNING

Duncan Kenworthy (Producer): Richard had the idea for *Notting Hill* while we were filming *Four Weddings*, so that's the summer of '93...

Richard Curtis (Writer): When I was lying sleepless at night, I would sometimes wonder what it would be like if I just turned up at my friend's house with the most famous person at that time. It all sprang from there.

Kenworthy: Richard and I formed a company called Notting Hill Pictures. We went to PolyGram and they made the deal even before they saw anything.

Hugh Grant: Richard would cheer me up on bad days saying: "I have a funny new movie for you." I waited five years for it to cross my desk.

Kenworthy: Then in 1996 I was making *Lawn Dogs* in Kentucky when I got the script. Richard kept working through the end of '96 to the beginning of '97, when we started to look for a director.

Roger Michell (Director): I was sent a script two years ago, one of those weird, flop-onto-the-doormat jobs; I read it and decided to get involved.

Kenworthy: Roger was keen to shoot in late '97 but Richard had other things in the way. In the end, Roger said: "In that case I'm going to make *Titanic Town*." Immediately after, we went into pre-production on *Notting Hill*, so he's just come through two films back to back. We went into production in January 1998.

Grant: Never has a human being taken longer to write a straightforward romantic comedy...



Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts made *Notting Hill* a huge British hit.

EARLY CHANGES

Kenworthy: Richard's an unusual writer in that he's put himself through draft after draft. In the first draft I saw, the girl who is now Honey – Hugh Grant's character's sister – was a potential love interest. At one point the central conundrum in the film was which one he should choose: the famous film star or the girl in the record shop across the road. In the end, Richard just didn't want to make that choice.

CASTING

Kenworthy: I remember that we were sitting in Richard's office at Portobello looking at videos and we rather made a meal of deciding which actress we wanted because it's sort of enjoyable, like Fantasy Football. It was a scene in *Michael Collins* that convinced us about Julia Roberts: the moment when Liam Neeson proposes to her and she accepts.

Curtis: I was thinking about Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly when I wrote the script, and both of them were unavailable.

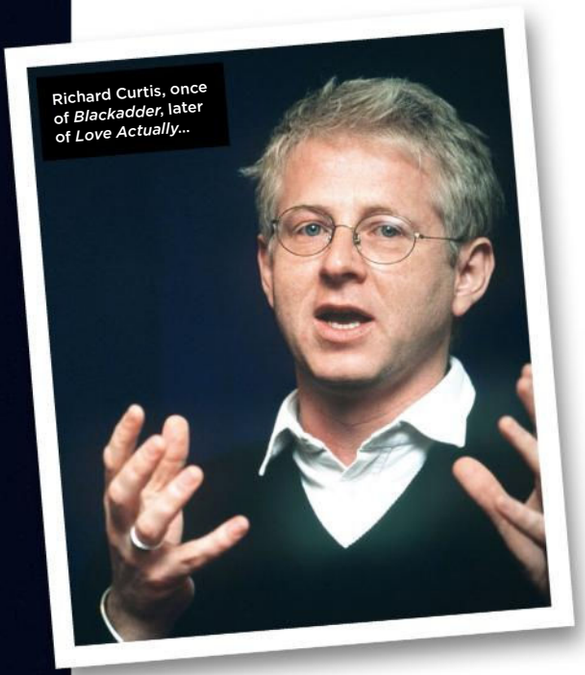
Kenworthy: It was quite hard to even approach her because her agent wouldn't take the call unless it was an offer. We finally got the call that Julia would meet us, and we thought we were in with a tiny chance.

Julia Roberts: I had to play cool, make them come over and take me to lunch, and it was such a fun day. We sat for so long chatting about this and that, and all the time I was being very coy.

Kenworthy: She made a complete meal out of teasing us. Roger kept leaving the restaurant to go and smoke, because he was so nervous. She asked some perceptive questions about the script and said: "You know I can be funny too," because in a way it was the Hugh Grant character who got all the funny lines. And she said: "Are you thinking of doing another draft?"

"If I met Anna Scott, I'd definitely give her some advice. And a nice slap once in a while"





Richard Curtis, once of *Blackadder*, later of *Love Actually*...

And we weren't, but we replied: "Oh yes, we're just about to."

Roberts: And I suddenly realised the time and I said: "I'm supposed to be doing *David Letterman*, I've got to go." But we were right in the middle of things so I said: "Come over to my house because I have to change and get ready." So they came to my house and hung out.

Then my sister came over and asked: "Who are these people?" And I whispered "I'm going to work with them, but don't tell them." Then they went to *David Letterman* with me and they were all crammed into my tiny little dressing room.

Kenworthy: Julia was going off to do a documentary about orangutans in Borneo and we said we'd have another draft to show her when she got back. It was good because we spent more time thinking about her character. When she returned she read the new draft and said yes, she'd do it.

Grant: My nerves at the first preliminary read-through in New York were out of control. Fear always goes straight to my voice and for the first 20 pages or so, Julia would say something romantic and funny to me, and I found I could only respond in an angry bark. After that, I started to settle down a bit and thought I was pretty funny, but Richard told me afterwards that my voice had gone incredibly high and posh, like the prep-school boy in that *Seven-Up* documentary.

Curtis: The casting took a very long time, except for the two leads which took no time at all because they were the first people we sent it to.

Kenworthy: We got one of the best casting directors around, Mary Selway. The very first reading that Mary pulled together had probably five actors who ended up in the final cast, but we went on auditioning and auditioning after that. You look at the cast list now and it reads like a Who's Who of British sitcom, but that was the last thing on our minds at the time. I have to admit I'd never seen *The Thin Blue Line* when we cast James Dreyfus [who plays Thacker's fellow bookshop employee]. I cast him thinking he was this very serious actor, and then the next week I saw him playing a camp policeman in this sitcom and I thought: "Oh, my God, what have I done?"

Michell: I'd worked with Rhys Ifans at the National Theatre, in *Under Milk Wood*. I really wanted him to play Spike, but unfortunately the character had been written as a Scot in the script. So we got Rhys in and the Scotsman changed into a Welshman.

REHEARSALS

Michell: We rehearsed for two weeks in an old Methodist chapel.

Grant: It was this freezing cold church hall in Notting Hill during April and went very well on the whole. The other British actors were all a bit too talented for my liking, but they were very nice to me. Julia was brilliant and very unstarry, but she was so cold that we had to have two men tail her around the room with gas heaters to stop her passing out.

Roberts: I thought it was going to be really, really easy and that I was at a great advantage. Then I realised that I was being foolish about it and Anna Scott was nothing like me. At times I didn't even really like her. If I met her I'd definitely give her some advice. And a nice slap once in a while.

THE SHOOT

Curtis: Notting Hill is an extraordinary mix of cultures. It seemed like a proper and realistic place where two people from different worlds could meet and co-exist: that Anna would be shopping there, that William would live there and that Spike might think it was a groovy place to live.

Rhys Ifans: Spike probably got himself to London, got off the train at Paddington and Notting Hill's about as far as he's going to get into the city. You know, "God, I'm knackered. I think I'll live 'ere."

Kenworthy: It was a scary decision to shoot on location. Of course we did have Stuart Craig, who →

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This shot 'London' enough for you?

© EVERETT/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

is a three-time Oscar winner and I think the best production designer in the world. We talked about spending a lot of money on a back lot at Shepperton. But then we just thought: "Why not try to shoot for real?"

Michell: I was worried about taking Hugh, Julia and a film crew onto Portobello Road because I just thought we'd be told to stop filming, but it was so well prepared. We had a fantastic location manager called Sue Quinn and she was so crafty about how she talked to everyone involved. All the extras were from the area.

Kenworthy: We also got a local security team, run by this guy called Ishmahil, who everybody in Notting Hill knew. He hired people to help us with the security and they were effectively the community liaison officers. With every resident we disrupted, our people said: "You know we can't pay you a fee, but if you tell us what your favourite charity is, we'll send £100 to that charity in your name." I think we made 200 contributions.

FILMS IN FILMS

Michell: It was fun shooting the films within the film because they're in completely different styles. There's a whole back story to the sci-fi movie that Anna stars in: *Helix*.

Roberts: *Helix*! I save the world in *Helix*! I talked to Roger. *Helix* was a great movie, trust me.

Michell: My direction to her was: "You're about to save the entire world." I also created a whole back story for the internal film set at the art gallery, just to give the actors something to chew on while they were doing it. And Matthew Modine [who features in the art gallery film] was great. Both of the actors who had cameos [Alec Baldwin also makes an appearance] were really game because it's weird for them to come onto a set for half a day and it's bloody hard work – everyone else knows each other really well and you're the new boy, even if you're a big star.

HUGH, JULIA AND RHYS

Roberts: With Hugh, pretty much right off the bat we were joking around and carrying on and all telling stories and stuff and I felt pretty confident that we were going to get on well.

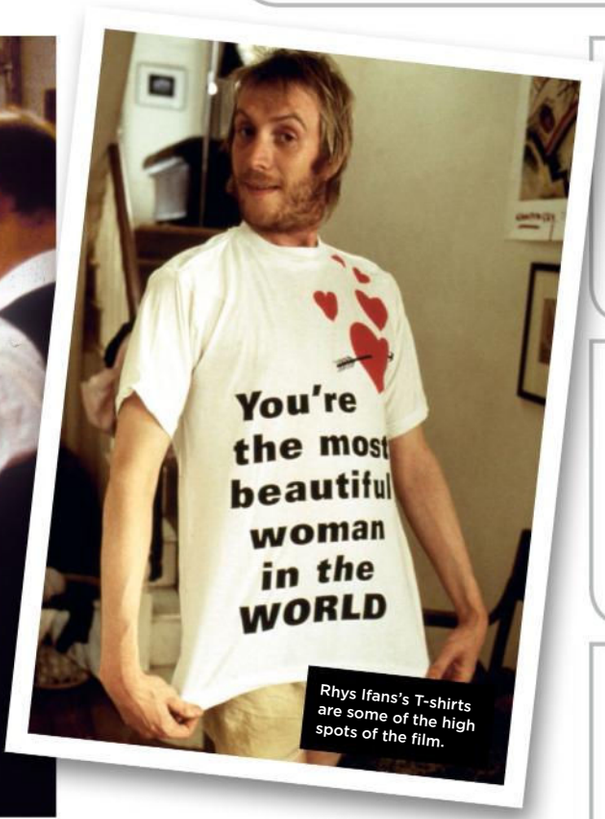
Grant: Julia was a real laugh. A bit scary, of course, being such a big star and a good actress, but deep down very silly and teasable. I couldn't have liked her more.

Ifans: Hugh's got a healthy dose of rogue in him. Spike's punchlines have to be fed to him and if you didn't have a feed like Hugh... He's a brilliant, very generous actor. People ask: "Is it scary when you're asked to act with famous people?" No, it's a fucking luxury. What's scary is if you're faced with someone who can't act. The opportunity to work with someone who's good at what they do, then that's just a joy: your performance improves as a result of that.

"Julia was a real laugh. A bit scary, of course, being such a big star, but deep down very silly and teasable"



Was it the one about the butcher and the actress's daughter?



Rhys Ifans's T-shirts are some of the high spots of the film.

Grant: Rhys went off and had lunch at Shepperton with a bunch of Welsh extras from *The Mummy*, denied that he was drunk when he got back to our set and then mouthed: "Plastered, mate" to me while we were doing the actual scene.
Ifans: I did a lot of nothing when filming, drank a lot of cider, didn't wash me hair, sat in dark rooms. We were filming in the Savoy and I turned up and they wouldn't let me in. They thought I was a fuckin' wino. But it's quite liberating, just living in a pair of skids, in the presence of Julia Roberts. There's not a lot of room for airs and graces after that.
Roberts: If you walked onto the set first thing in the morning and saw a very tall man with very odd hair who had done very disgusting things to his teeth – which is my pet peeve anyway – and was wearing this woman's shirt that was too small and pants that sagged down to his hips, you'd kind of go like this [holds out arms to shield herself]: "Okay, morning," and just walk away as quickly as possible.
Ifans: I think I must have been the first Welsh person in pants she'd met. She's great to work with. But I just found it amusing that I'd be in Shepperton Studios and spend most of the day in these pants, sitting and chatting away with Julia Roberts.

FIRST SCREENINGS

Curtis: The first two times we screened it, it felt pretty scary because you had no idea whether you were going to be greeted with total silence. When *The Tall Guy* previewed in Reading it went down really well, and then we took it to New Jersey and there was not a single laugh from beginning to end. I learnt a very important thing then, which is to put in a really clear, obvious joke quite early on which makes the audience relax about what kind of film they're watching. Like in this movie, Spike's T-shirts are meant to be funny.
Roberts: At the screening, I laughed so loud that people turned round.
Curtis: There's a suspicion that the really high test score [reportedly 93 percent of the people said they'd recommend it to a friend] was the one Julia was at. She did come to one of the previews and I think that was the one that got a really high score. But it tested well everywhere.
Michell: The real relief was to find out that it was funny but also there's the bits of the film where they rustle.
Curtis: The final cut came out at about three-and-a-half hours, so it was a real rewrite to get that down.
Kenworthy: We learnt a lot from the testing process, but there were some strange casualties...

THE MISSING SCENES

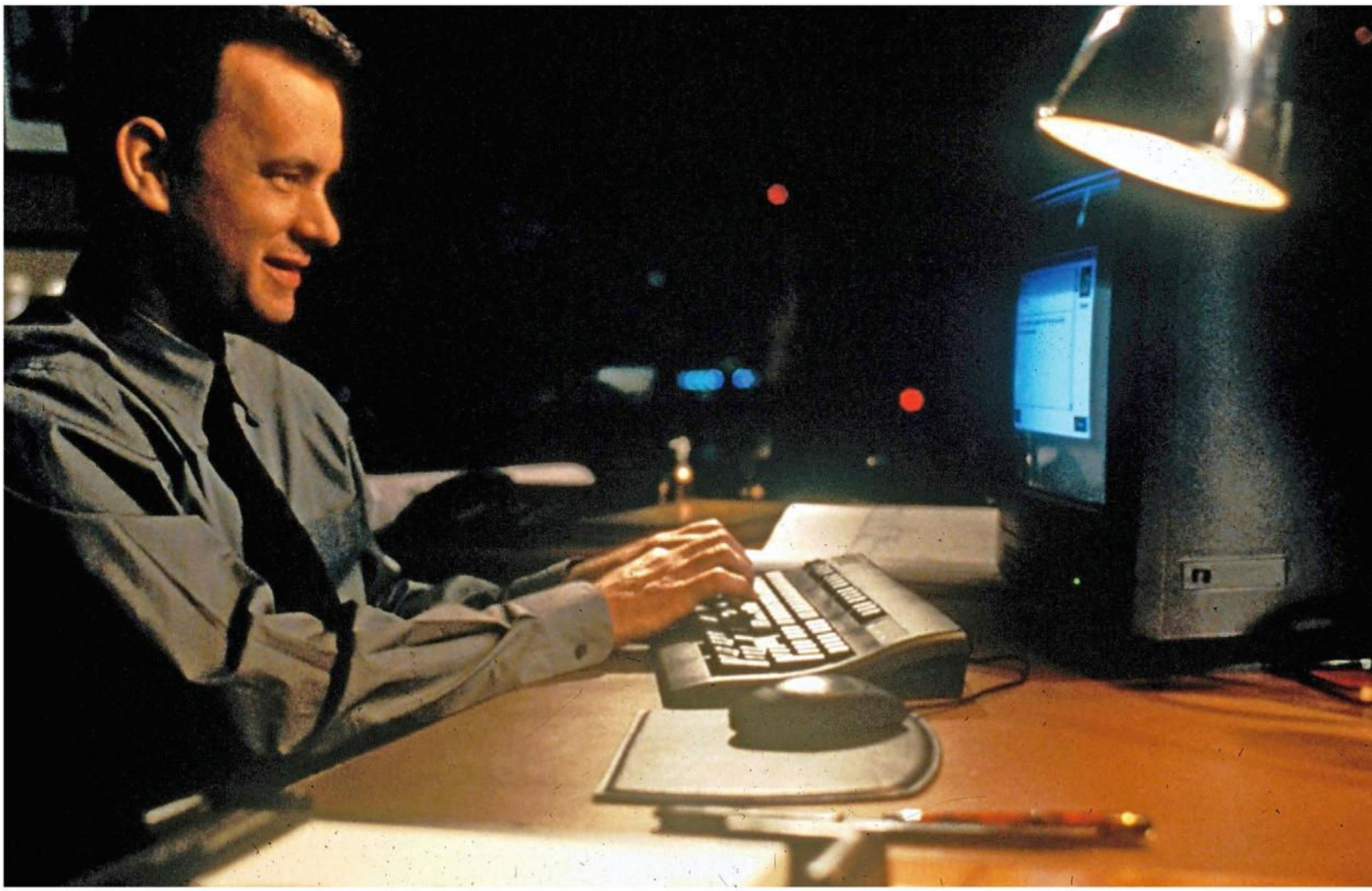
Kenworthy: We cut out a scene with William's parents that we originally thought was the funniest bit in the film, because it just slowed the story at a time when we thought the audience wanted it to speed up. We're going to put that one on the DVD, though.
Michell: There was a long scene right at the beginning where all the friends are introduced. That was delightfully funny, but later on you meet them at the dinner party very adroitly.
Curtis: Another very important scene was when Max, the friend played by Tim McInnerny, talked William into going up to Hampstead Heath at Kenwood, but we found it wasn't necessary in the end. And the scene is very long. Spike plays the whole of a hymn on a sword, and it turns out that he's a musician. And there was a whole argument between Hugh and his mum about her brushing his hair during the service.
Kenworthy: It wasn't just that – the whole end of the film was very complicated as far as plot was concerned. We went from the press conference to the honeymoon suite where Julia and Hugh were on their honeymoon, and Spike is on television being interviewed by Trevor McDonald, who's doing a news story on Anna and William's marriage, showing clips. Then we went to a scene at Tony's restaurant, where all the friends are sitting having lunch. Before the restaurant had been a failure; now, because of Anna Scott eating there, it was a huge success.

THE VERDICT

Curtis: My favourite thing is Elvis Costello singing 'She' because it's the only thing I'm not responsible for and I absolutely love the lyrics of that song.
Michell: My favourite scene is in the bookshop at the end when she comes out and asks Hugh to love her and he says no. It's very simply shot, very straightforward and very well performed.
Curtis: As a viewer, I'm extremely relieved whenever Rhys comes on. The other thing I love is whenever Julia says a really banal line really beautifully. If I've written something dodgy she makes it great. I just dread that I'll read some really horrible review and I'll say: "Oh, that's right, it was crap," and then after that I won't enjoy it.

***Notting Hill* is available on Blu-ray and DVD.**

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Em@il Intuition

Following their popular pairing in Sleepless In Seattle, '90s icons Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks returned for You've Got Mail, the surest box office hit since Titanic 2: He Didn't Really Drown...

WORDS MARTYN PALMER AND CAM WINSTANLEY





We fear this picture might give away the ending!

So Mr Hanks, what was harder? Enduring boot camp for a week before wading through freezing tides and avoiding explosions for World War Two epic *Saving Private Ryan*? Or playing a hard-nosed bookstore owner and email flirt to Meg Ryan in romantic comedy *You've Got Mail*?

Hanks ought to know. But listen to this: "On *Private Ryan*, every day was outdoors and I only had to worry about one wardrobe – and that looked a whole lot better if I'd slept in the dirt anyway. I was with a great group of guys and it was a very physical movie. We were running about all over the place and it was a joy. That's the great hidden secret of *Saving Private Ryan* – it was a blast to make."

"On the other hand, *You've Got Mail* is set almost all indoors and we were working in real uncomfortable, airless apartments," Hanks →

"We were working in real uncomfortable, airless apartments"



Hanks and Ryan didn't work together again till 2015's *Ithaca*, directed by Ryan.

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says. "I mean, I had to be in make-up for two hours before going on set, because they were fussing with my hair and my wardrobe and everything had to be perfect. Then there was this constant preening...

"Now all the time the film is going through the camera you have to be light and frothy like you don't have a care in the world – no matter what is going on in the outside world. People say making a romantic comedy looks *easy*. You've got to be kidding..."

NEW ROMANTICS

You've Got Mail – which is loosely based on Ernst Lubitsch's classic 1940 James Stewart/Margaret Sullavan vehicle *The Shop Around The Corner* – takes the notion of two people who loathe each other face-to-face gradually falling in love as anonymous pen pals. In this '90s makeover version, business rivals Joe Fox (Hanks) and Kathleen Kelly (Ryan) argue by day and cyber-snuggle up via email by night. His virtual handle is NY 152, hers is Shopgirl, and the route to romance is dotted with mouse clicks and icons flashing in corners of VDUs.

If you're going to risk the rough-and-tumble of making a rom-com, you might as well get the best team you can. *You've Got Mail* is as close to a safe bet as Hollywood ever makes: it's written and directed by *Sleepless In Seattle* writer/director Nora Ephron and stars '90s America's favourite pairing of Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks. But, as Hanks points out, the illusion of a perfect rom-com world is the result of a lot of hard work.

"They are often discounted as 'romantic comedies' as though these are easy things to just go and knock off," he says. "And everybody has a laugh and it's like falling off a log. Believe me, that's not the case. Dramas can be made so much better solely by one element – a great script or a mesmerising performance.

"But a movie like this really has to fire on all cylinders," Hanks insists. "The gags, the story, the logic of it all has to be defined by whoever wrote it. There are a lot of movies that claim to be romantic comedies – I've been in a couple of them myself and they are just these unengaging things done by the numbers. So when it happens, everything has to happen in the perfect manner."

For Ephron, who co-wrote the script with her younger sister Delia, it's familiar territory. With scripts like *Sleepless In Seattle* and *When Harry Met Sally* she's marked out her happy-go-cynical style, and when producer Lauren Shuler Donner (*Free Willy*) optioned the rights to *The Shop Around The Corner*, the Ephrons jumped at the chance to adapt one of their favourite films.

"Nora brings total intelligence," says Shuler Donner. "This movie is all about words and she's a total wordsmith – she has a great gift of humour and insight. There's not many writers who can be both romantic and cynical at the same time, and I don't know how she does but it sure makes for a great blend."

"A movie like this has to fire on all cylinders. The gags, the story..."



Meg Ryan

The '90s rom-com queen talks Tom, brass bands and email...

Tom Hanks has very strong opinions on why there are so few romantic comedies that work. Why do you think it is?
I think it is really hard to find good obstacles to keep potential lovers apart. Way back when, it used to be easy cos you could use class or race or something, but now these two characters have very different world views. And that's what's so great about the movie, because it is really very simple. It's really about what is going on in the culture right now in the guise of this romantic story. People still fall in love and that's what it's all about. I don't think there is less romance in people.

So what's your relationship with the internet then?
I am a consummate emailer but I don't really do that much surfing. I don't know about you, but someone has to come over and help me learn about that stuff because, to be honest, I'm not very good at it.

Do you ever get round to checking out the Meg Ryan Web shrines?
No way! I would be way too scared to go there...

What's it like watching yourself on the big screen?
A drag. I'm very protective of the idea that I'm living my life from the inside out and I don't really want to see a lot of the other stuff. I don't read anything that gets written about me – I think I would be way too sensitive to it. And when I see myself on film I'm like: "God, I thought I looked so different, I thought I sounded so different or thought I really got that across in a take or in a scene." Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It's always been like that, although it's getting easier to watch myself because now I just anticipate the feeling.

It's now your third movie co-starring alongside Tom Hanks – you two must be doing something right...
I just love being around that guy, I love everything about him. The great thing about him is that he is just as good – no, *better* – in real life. He can talk about anything, he's really funny and yet he could be so different. He could easily have all this attendant Elvis stuff that comes with fame – the assistants and trailers and all. Yet he doesn't have any of it.

I just think I'm very lucky to work with him. With Tom, we don't just have to talk about Hollywood. He can talk to you about anything and make it interesting. He is a really observant person, the conversation isn't all about him and I think there couldn't be anything more graceful than that.

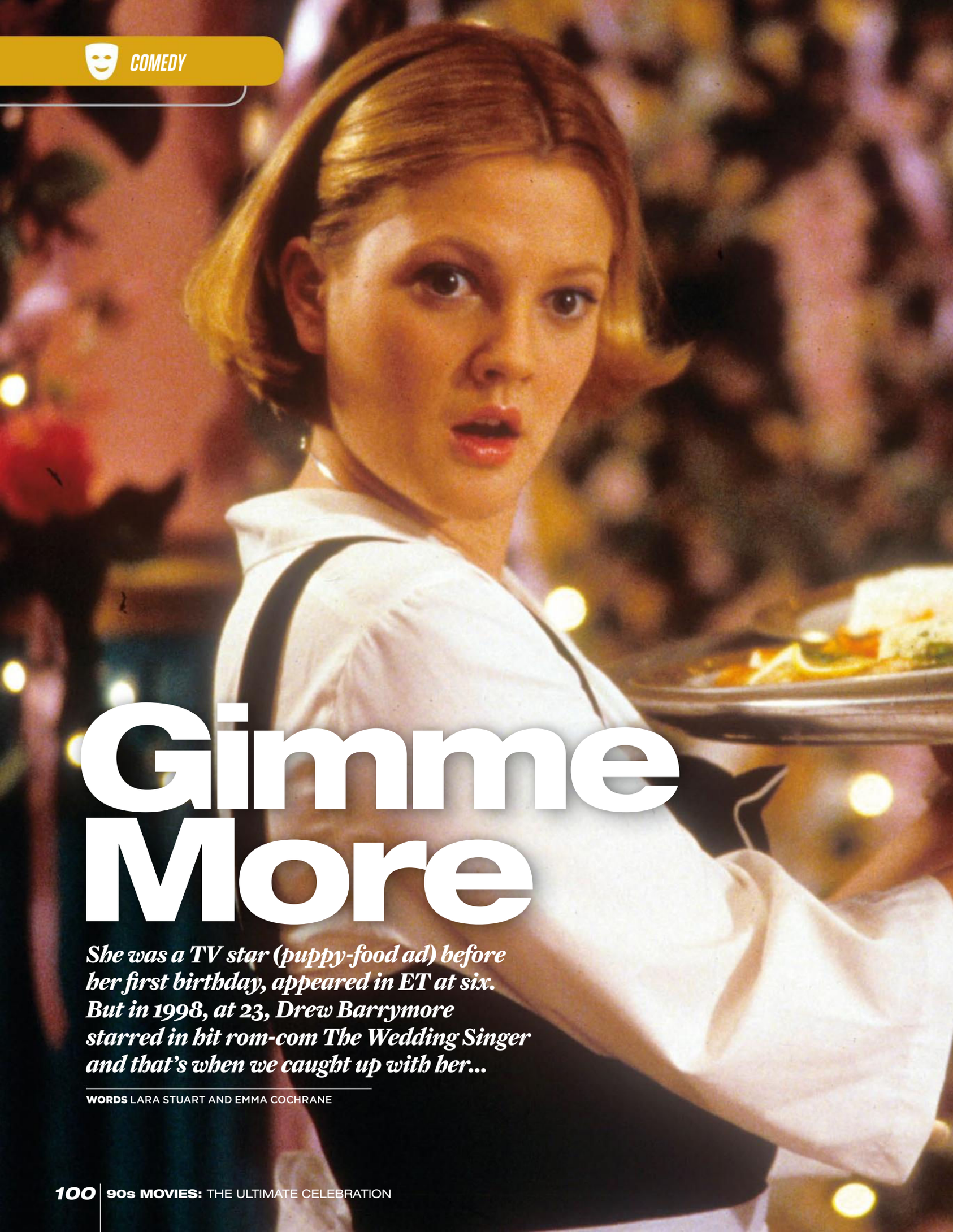
So would you say that you and he are that similar? Separated at birth types?
I don't know. I mean, we're friends but we don't really hang out that much together. I just think we work in a very similar way. I like to keep things really simple because it makes me feel better and he does the same thing.

Is it true Dennis Quaid sent a brass band to play you *Happy Birthday*?
Pretty good, huh? I still have a picture of it. You know, I was filming *The Presidio* with Sean Connery. Then this brass band came between the sound stages at the Paramount lot, and when Sean saw it, he just swooped me up in his arms and posed with me in front of them. It was amazing. Dennis doesn't think small – he thinks very, very big.

Did you watch the original *Shop Around The Corner* before you worked on *You've Got Mail*?
I saw the Sullavan and Stewart movie, yeah. I'm probably the only one who's going to say this, but if Nora had said she was planning a remake after me having seen that movie, I wouldn't have been interested. But I read the script and I thought that what she was trying to do with this romance was great. You really do want them to be together in the end, but you also see how observational she is about America. She layers it all in such a beautiful, seamless way.

So do you like being directed by women?
Well, Nora is the only female I've been directed by, and obviously we work well together. I don't know if that's because it's just her or because she's a woman. She does this thing, she goes: "Oh Meg, it's, like, you know..." And I go: "I know, I know..." And she goes: "Yeah, yeah, yeah..." It's almost telepathic. We have this weird connection.

***You've Got Mail* is out now on DVD.**



Gimme More

She was a TV star (puppy-food ad) before her first birthday, appeared in ET at six. But in 1998, at 23, Drew Barrymore starred in hit rom-com The Wedding Singer and that's when we caught up with her...

WORDS LARA STUART AND EMMA COCHRANE



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THE CURSE OF THE CHILD ACTOR IS NOT TO BE IGNORED. SHIRLEY TEMPLE CHUCKED IT ALL IN TO BECOME AN AMBASSADOR. River Phoenix ended his days on a sidewalk after speed-balling himself to death, while Natalie Wood bought the farm in the middle of an ocean, drowning "by misadventure". Even Dean Stockwell had to satisfy himself with becoming a sidekick in *Quantum Leap*, fiddling with a beeping calculator thing throughout an eternity of mediocre time-travelling incidents.

Drew Barrymore could so easily have been another Phoenix. She had already tasted alcohol, dope and cocaine before she was a teenager. And she could easily have been (and for a while was) another Stockwell, consigned to B-list, straight-to-video support roles.

But instead Barrymore chose not to be typecast. Bit-parts in big films (*Batman Forever*, *Scream*) led to lead roles that got her noticed again. The film that put her on the map was *The Wedding Singer*, which beat out blockbusters *Lost In Space* and *Star Trek: Insurrection* at the box office. She plays a waitress who finds herself strangely attracted to Robbie, the local wedding singer (Adam Sandler). The comedy, set in 1985, sparked an '80s revival in the States – and put Drew back in the spotlight.

Wedding Singer co-star Sandler tries to explain her appeal: "I love Drew. Everybody loves Drew. My mother loves her, even the birds in my yard love her." Barrymore is equally complimentary...

Did you and Adam Sandler get along from the beginning?
Absolutely, because I was meeting someone who I admired so much. I mean, I love him and I'm a huge fan; he's a writer and he plays instruments and paints. I'd like to work with him for the rest of my life.

Why did *The Wedding Singer* appeal to you?
Adam and I started collaborating on this project when it was only a concept. It was a great script written by wonderful minds; Tim Herlihy, who writes all of Adam's movies; and then Carrie Fisher came in and wrote an interesting, different perspective on the women. Then finally Judd Apatow came in.

Then the set process was so great. Every morning we'd walk in and people would clap, for everybody; I mean, it would be like: "The grips are here! All right!" Everyone showed up for work with smiles on their faces; nobody was like: "Get me out of here, I've had enough."

What was it like for you to work on a horror film like *Scream*?
For me that character was such an intense challenge, you know, and there were two ways I could go with it; I could go really campy, B-movie, candy-apple, lip-dripping, vicious vixen – like the girls that kick him in the sternum, slide under the stairs and run. But that wasn't me; I know I'd want to be fighting for my life, but I'd be pooping, peeing, vomiting and crying in the corner. I know that, I would probably have a heart attack before the killer even got to me. This was the greatest opportunity I think I'll ever have to do a character like that and to act sheer, crying, breathing, hyperventilating emotion for eight days, 16 hours a day.

What did you think of the sequel, *Scream 2*, where they have Heather Graham play your character in *Stab*?
I liked it. It was interesting to see somebody else play my part. Well, it was a little bad, but then it's like you see everybody playing inside the movie and you just realise it's a theme, and I enjoyed it. It was like: "That's so funny, that's me."

How do you look back on *ET*, the movie that made you famous at the age of six, and the experience of working with Steven Spielberg?
I started working when I was 11 months old and I'd done some movies and commercials and even a feature film, *Altered States*, so it's like I had worked my way up. I had been working for nearly six years, and when I did that movie, *ET*, my whole life changed.

I'm really glad that it happened so young, because it taught me how to deal with that; it's like I'm not a freak because of that. I don't have an ego, I'm not a flash in the pan, I know I'll never stop working.

Ultimately I always think that it was the best working environment; I mean, getting to work with Steven Spielberg, who's the most incredible director. I met this man who treated me like an adult, and that made me feel so good. I love the way Steven has a relationship with children, how he can be mature and teach them something and guide them as the director more eloquently than anyone I've ever worked with, but he can also play along and have that imagination and belief and support and encouragement for kids.

Would you want your children to start acting at the same age that you did?
I wouldn't want them to go through what I went through, not because I look down upon that, but just because I want a different experience for every individual. That question poses something; the revelation that my mother, although she was looked down upon for letting me live the lifestyle that I did, gave me an opportunity. If not for her, I would not be sitting at this table. Thank God she put me to work because I'm working now, I'm the one who kept myself on track, I'm a responsible employee, and that is my own doing; but she really did give me that opportunity.

It's strange for an actor to say they're an employee.
Really? But that's what I meant about growing up in it. I think that to have such a deep appreciation for what I do is absolutely fundamental in this industry, because I watched what it can do to people and it screws them up. But I find that gratitude is the thing that keeps you grounded the most.

HORROR



"You little asswipe! You don't knock it off you're gonna be shittin' this basketball... pardon my French!"

P108

"Now Sid, don't you blame the movies. Movies don't create psychos. Movies make psychos more creative!"

P104


“Where we’re going, we won’t need eyes to see.”
P112
“I’m afraid to close my eyes, I’m afraid to open them.”
P116



SCREAM

Wes Craven's meta-horror re-invented the slasher, repositioned the final girl and almost killed the genre; it's still one of the most important films of the '90s...

WORDS: SARAH DOBBS

"Do you like scary movies?" purred a sinister voice over the telephone, and immediately *Scream* had marked itself out as something new in a tired genre. When it was released in 1996, the classic slasher franchises had all pretty much run out of steam. There had been five sequels to *Halloween*, six to *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, and eight to *Friday The 13th*, and no matter how high the body counts or gory the kills, audiences just weren't as scared as they used to be. *Scream* was different: smart and self-referential, it reminded horror fans what they'd loved about the genre in the first place, and scared them silly at the same time.

Scream's USP was that it took old tropes and remixed them, a blending of old and new that even extended to its creative team. Director Wes Craven was already an old hand, having directed several classics of the '70s and '80s – *The Last House On The Left*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street* – before *Scream* came along. But writer Kevin Williamson was an unknown quantity, more familiar with horror from the other side of the screen. What he brought to the table was a longstanding love of scary movies that made him want to bring back the fear to cinema.

"I grew up during the wave of slasher films starting with *Halloween*, in 1978," he remembers. "I loved the audience reaction to that film, the way they participated in it. That's what I wanted to do with *Scream* – to write a movie where the audience is screaming at the characters on screen what to do. I took my love of all those films and sort of put them together."

It's not hard to pick out Williamson's influences. Many of them are right there in the dialogue, as characters frequently compare their predicament to the plots of iconic horror movies. *Prom Night*, *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, *I Spit On Your Grave*, *Candyman* and *The Exorcist* all get namechecked, while the climactic party scene at the end sees characters actually watching *Halloween* while being stalked by a killer. *Scream* isn't just a mashup of horror's greatest hits, though. By the time →

Former Fonz Henry Winkler stays cool in the face of serial murders.

"SCREAM PLAYS WITH CHARACTER ARCHETYPES JUST AS MUCH AS IT MESSES WITH GENRE CONVENTIONS"





Drew Barrymore does what it says on the tin.

Williamson was writing his script, teenagers had changed, and were no longer the kind of naïfs who might wander off alone into the woods to be picked off by a nasty man with a knife. They'd seen enough horror movies to know better.

To get a teen audience to buy into teen characters, those characters had to know horror movies as well as they did; by letting them inhabit the same pop culture landscape as his audience, Williamson created characters viewers could really identify with. Were you a Randy, a film nerd frustrated by the way no-one else recognised your movie references? Or more of a Sidney, who doesn't watch horror movies because their endless clichés insult your intelligence? Either way, *Scream* was talking to you.

"I think the problem with horror films has always been that you don't really get a lot of characterisations of people you're really emotionally invested in," says Williamson. "I want to care about people when I watch a horror film, because that's when you get invested." And *Scream* does more than just pay lip service to that problem: it gives you characters to care about. Chief amongst them is *Scream*'s final girl, Sidney Prescott.

Played by Neve Campbell, already famous for *Party Of Five* and fresh off the set of *The Craft*, Sidney is very much the film's centre. "I remember feeling insecure," Campbell recalled. "Everyone around me was being goofy and funny and had all these great one-liners, and I seemed so stoic. But I came to realise that if the audience couldn't see the movie through my eyes, then they wouldn't see me at all. They weren't going to feel it and weren't going to care. So it was important for me to remain reality-based – there had to be some source of reality for it to be good."

GIRL POWER

The pretty girl running away from a man with a knife is a hallmark of the slasher genre, but Sidney was a new kind of final girl – more survivor than victim. When she's first introduced, she's already been through some serious trauma: the film's events take place in the days leading up to the one-year anniversary of her mother's murder. *Scream* doesn't shy away from dealing with her emotions, letting Sidney be as hurt and damaged by it as you'd reasonably expect someone to be. But she's far from destroyed by it.

And while most horror movies pre-*Scream* had female leads because their perceived vulnerability invited their mostly male audiences to feel protective towards them, Sidney makes it pretty damn clear that she doesn't need protecting. She saves herself (and her friends) by outwitting the killers, in defiance of all the genre rules that said she shouldn't be able to. *Scream* plays with character archetypes just as much as it messes with genre conventions, so that David Arquette's



THE RULES

Watch enough horror movies and you'll eventually start to spot certain patterns. The *Scream* movies are all about playing with horror conventions, and they weren't shy about it – each movie sets out its own 'rules', before gleefully breaking them. Here's what you need to know:

How to successfully survive a horror movie
- Don't have sex
- Don't drink or do drugs
- Never, ever say "I'll be right back"

What to expect from a horror sequel
- The body count is always bigger
- The death scenes are always way more elaborate, with more gore
- Never, ever assume the killer is dead

How things change in the final part of a trilogy
- The killer is gonna be superhuman
- Anyone, including the main character, can die
- The past will come back to bite you

Rules for a horror movie remake
- The deaths have to be way more extreme
- Unexpected is the new cliché
- Virgins can die now
- The latest technology is always involved, and integral to the plot
- To survive, you probably have to be gay
- Don't fuck with the original



Blood on his hands: Skeet Ulrich as Billy.





cop character, Dewey, is earnest and bumbling rather than authoritative and reassuring, while bitchy tabloid reporter Gale, played by Courteney Cox, turns out to be brave and resourceful. In fact, the only time Sidney needs saving in the movie, it's Gale who steps up.

Before *Scream*, Wes Craven had considered moving away from horror, tired of the misogyny that seemed to permeate the genre. "I have this career-long ambivalence towards doing genre films," he explained. "There's an element to the genre that can be misogynistic – always carving up girls! And there's a part of me that feels, 'How much longer do you want to do this?'" Craven actually passed on *Scream* initially, put off by the first scene in which Drew Barrymore's character is graphically disembowelled by a horror-loving murderer. In the end, though, the fact that Barrymore was on board made him reconsider – and *Scream*'s range of interesting, well-rounded female characters proves that horror doesn't have to be anti-women.

Perhaps that's why *Scream* was such a commercial success. Women who, like Sidney, might have been annoyed by horror's reliance on "some stupid killer stalking some big-breasted girl who can't act who's always running up the stairs when she should be going out the front door", found *Scream* offered a different model of the final girl – one they could relate to and cheer for. Appealing to both genders saw *Scream* rake in the cash at the box office: even now, it's the highest grossing slasher movie of all time, closely followed by *Scream 2* and *Scream 3*.

Success like that doesn't come without a backlash, though. Before its release, *Scream* had run into trouble with the MPAA, who wanted to give it an NC-17 rating because of its gory content; eight different cuts were submitted to the film classification body before Dimension's founder, Bob Weinstein, personally got involved and persuaded them that *Scream*'s satirical side meant it was criticising rather than glorifying violence. But not everyone was convinced. In the late '90s, *Scream* was cited in more than one murder trial involving teenagers, as an example of the kind of dangerous media that could warp young minds and lead to tragedy.

Scream had its own built-in response, though. As one of the killers quips, "Don't blame the movies. Movies don't create psychos, movies make psychos more creative!" Flippant, yes, but it's made pretty clear that anyone who watches horror movies and identifies with the villains is misinterpreting the material. What you're supposed to learn is how to survive – and not by being a virgin or sticking to soft drinks, either.

Scream's real legacy was the death and rebirth of horror. In its immediate aftermath, filmmakers scrambled to copy *Scream*'s mixture of horror, comedy and eloquent teenagers, creating the '90s slasher boom – though none of them quite got it right. Even Kevin Williamson failed to recapture *Scream*'s magic when he wrote the passable but comparatively limp stalk-and-slash *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. Multiple cynical me-too attempts to catch the teen meta-zeitgeist even prompted some to declare the demise of true horror. In the longer term, *Scream* can be fairly credited with creating a whole new approach to horror; an ironic, post-modern approach that takes an audience's cynicism and uses it to surprise them. It's not hard to draw a line from more recent postmodern horrors like *Tucker And Dale Vs Evil* or *The Cabin In The Woods* straight back to *Scream*.

So do you like scary movies? Thanks to *Scream*, a lot more people can answer that question with a resounding "yes".

TREMORS

Jonathan Melville trembles with excitement remembering the ground-shaking monster movie...

I was working as an editor for the navy, who had a desert base in the Mojave, and on weekends the ranges were open to the employees. One day I was sitting out there on these boulders and thought how interesting it would be if there was something that could move through the sand like a fish and I couldn't get off the rock. This was in 1975 and I jotted the idea down and filed it away."

Steve "SS" Wilson is explaining to us the moment when the idea first came to him for what would, 15 years later, become one of the best-loved comedy-horror films of the '90s, *Tremors*. Starring Kevin Bacon and Fred Ward as Val McKee and Earl Bassett, two handymen in a small Nevada town who encounter strange goings-on under the ground, the film was a gloriously tongue-in-cheek throwback to the kind of '50s B-movies that everyone thought had gone out of fashion.

Used to shooting on 8mm since the age of 12, by the early '80s Wilson was making educational films for schools with his writing partner, Brent Maddock, noting that they were "always trying to bend the rules and get a sense of humour into things". It was in 1986 that Wilson and Maddock sold their sci-fi comedy script, *Short Circuit*, soon making their way to Steven Spielberg's Amblin on projects such as *The Land Before Time*, **Batteries Not Included* and *Harry And The Hendersons*.

> **"TO THIS DAY NONE OF US PARTICULARLY LIKE THE TITLE"**

"We discovered on *Short Circuit* that as writers we were shut out of the filmmaking process," says Wilson. "Our agent told us to go into our list of ideas to set us up as producers on one of them. One of those was 'Land Sharks', based on the idea I'd had in '75, and she liked it. It asked what would happen if a small town was attacked, like in *Invasion Of The Saucer Men*, and the only people to solve the problem are the two local handymen who they look to to solve all their problems. That's how Val and Earl were created."

After numerous failed attempts to sell their draft script, it eventually found its way to the desk of an executive at Universal, Jim Jacks. "Jim got us in to see the studio heads and got it into production, with the last piece of the puzzle being the studio insisting we had to get Kevin Bacon. We had this very fretful day when Ron Underwood, the director, went off to meet with Kevin and he finally said yes, so we got our money."

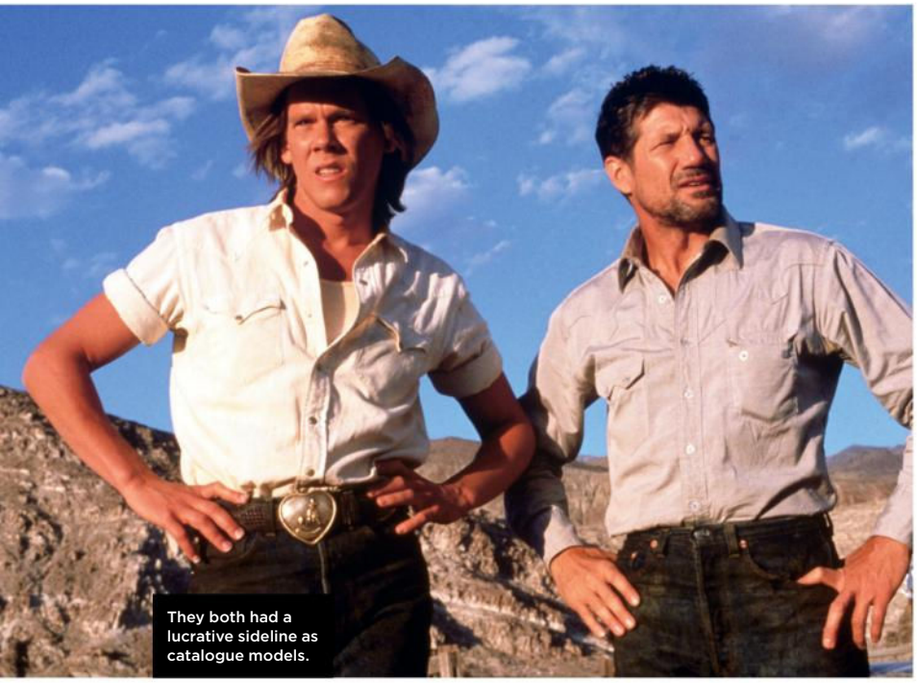
ALL IN THE FAMILY

Universal also asked that the filmmakers read people available to them, one of whom, Michael Gross, was best known at the time for starring in hit TV show *Family Ties* and who the studio thought would help in the film's marketing →



Tremors would bring home the Bacon on VHS.





They both had a lucrative sideline as catalogue models.



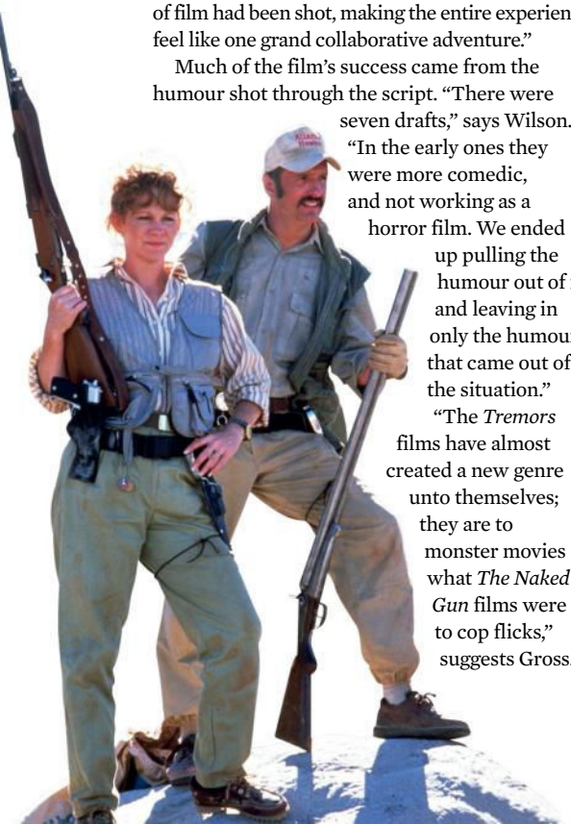
as survivalist Burt Gummer. According to Wilson, Gross "blew us away".

Now safely out of development hell, production was ready to begin in summer '89 on a script titled *Beneath Perfection*. "We thought that a quirky movie should have a quirky title. Tom Pollock, the head of Universal, said, 'You're going to do something to do with the ground shaking – how about *Tremors*?'. To this day none of us particularly like it."

For Michael Gross, the dominant memory of filming was "how much fun it was... It was hard work, yes, but I was delighted to be surrounded by such a wonderful cast. Steve and Brent had a marvellous script, but they were very much open to suggestions and changes up until the last frame of film had been shot, making the entire experience feel like one grand collaborative adventure."

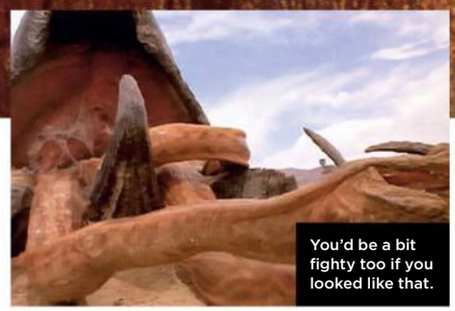
Much of the film's success came from the humour shot through the script. "There were seven drafts," says Wilson. "In the early ones they were more comedic, and not working as a horror film. We ended up pulling the humour out of it and leaving in only the humour that came out of the situation."

"The *Tremors* films have almost created a new genre unto themselves; they are to monster movies what *The Naked Gun* films were to cop flicks," suggests Gross.





Something told them that wasn't just any old snake.



You'd be a bit fighty too if you looked like that.

"Our tongues are always firmly planted in our cheeks, and the most serious of circumstances are presented in an offbeat way. I think the movies were popular because they didn't rely exclusively on CGI the way so many current films do. *Tremors* and its sequels always employed miniatures, puppetry and monsters in three dimensions."

Ah yes, the monsters. Dubbed 'Graboids' by the film's characters, the snake-like creatures were created by effects company ADI's Tom Woodruff and Alec Gillis, who didn't even have an office when production began. "I'm still astonished when I look at it – you just can't tell they were miniatures," says Wilson.

The decision not to reveal the Graboids' origins came from Wilson having watched hundreds of science fiction movies. "I realised early on that there were only four explanations. They're created by radioactivity! They're supernatural demons! They're from outer space! They've always been here and we've just never seen them before! Universal insisted we write the explanation in. They went for outer space and we wrote a scene where Burt is out driving and comes across the broken spaceship with the open pods and he's able to radio to the folks in town that he knows where they come from. When the new pages reached the set, the entire crew stood up against it and we had the sequence removed."

IN THE WILD

Tremors was finally unleashed upon the American cinema-going public on 19 January 1990, the publicity playing on the comedy that the team had tried hard to underplay. Box office takings weren't as healthy as hoped for; from an $11 million budget, the film grossed $17 million. "Tom called me and said, 'we blew the ad campaign'. They sold it as a comedy more than they should have."

Things may not have been great for *Tremors* on the big screen, but it was on the small screen that the film would come into its own. Unbeknownst to Wilson and Maddock, Universal was quietly developing a home video division, where *Tremors* took off. Big time. "It was huge," laughs Wilson. "We got a back-handed compliment from them when they said, 'Look, we could sell an empty video box called *Tremors*, we have to have a sequel.'

"They said that if we could get Kevin back it would be a feature, if not it would go straight to



It certainly beat shooting tin cans off fence posts.



Monster movie rule #1: walk softly and carry a big stick.

"BURT'S A BIT OF A LONE MERCENARY, THE ONE GUY YOU CAN CALL ON"

video. We begged Kevin to do it and the great irony is that, great as Kevin is, he was not a huge fan of *Tremors*. He considered it a rather low point in his career. Kevin said to us: 'When people speak to me about it they never say how great you were, they say how cool the worms were!'

"We wrote Kevin out of the first draft, in which Val and Earl were running an ostrich farm. We had Fred back; his only request was that he got to keep his hair long. Michael was delighted to come back."

After numerous outings in the role, does Gross feel he now sports any of Burt's personality traits? "There's very definitely a part of me that has Burt's over-developed sense of impending misfortune," the actor muses. "I'm also half-Irish, which may help explain things: William Butler Yeats famously said of a certain character, 'Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy.' That sounds a bit like Burt, does it not?"

High sales of *Tremors 2: Aftershocks* on VHS in 1996 led to Universal requesting *Tremors 3: Back To Perfection* in 2001. When part three became an even bigger success, Wilson and Maddock were faced with an ultimatum: *Tremors 4* was happening, with or without them.

"When you write a screenplay and sell it, your contract says you sell 'all the rights in any form of distribution now in existence or herein after invented throughout the universe'. So if I did something with *Tremors* on Mars they could sue me."

THE AFTERSHOCKS

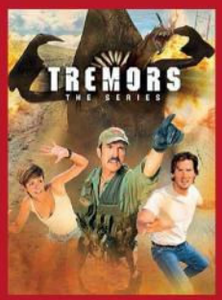
Tremors 4: The Legend Begins, a 2004 prequel set in the Wild West and starring Gross as Hiram Gummer, great-grandfather of Burt, didn't do as well as the previous installments, while a short-lived TV series (see 'Small-screen *Tremors*', below left) ended almost as soon as it had begun. A more direct sequel to *Tremors 3* was *Tremors 5: Bloodlines* (previously known as *Thunder From Down Under*), which came out in October 2015 to mixed reviews. This entry featured an older Burt, now star of his own survivalist TV series, heading to South Africa to face the newest incarnations of his favourite monsters. Wilson wasn't involved with the final product.

When asked how he feels about his time with *Tremors* more than 20 years on, Wilson, now an award-winning writer of books for young adults, remains buoyant, if a little wistful. "We can't complain because on *Tremors 1* to *4* we had all the control a filmmaker could hope for. With the series we lost control, which was frustrating and disappointing, and that part of the giant odyssey was a bit of a disappointment. But overall it's been great fun."

Would Gross consider a return to the role of Burt Gummer one last time? "I'd love to play Burt *more* than one last time if it were a good script and the original team were involved. If someone other than the original creative team came up with a good *Tremors* screenplay, let's just say I'd be awfully surprised."

Small-screen *Tremors*

KICKING UP DUST IN A SHORT-RUN SERIES

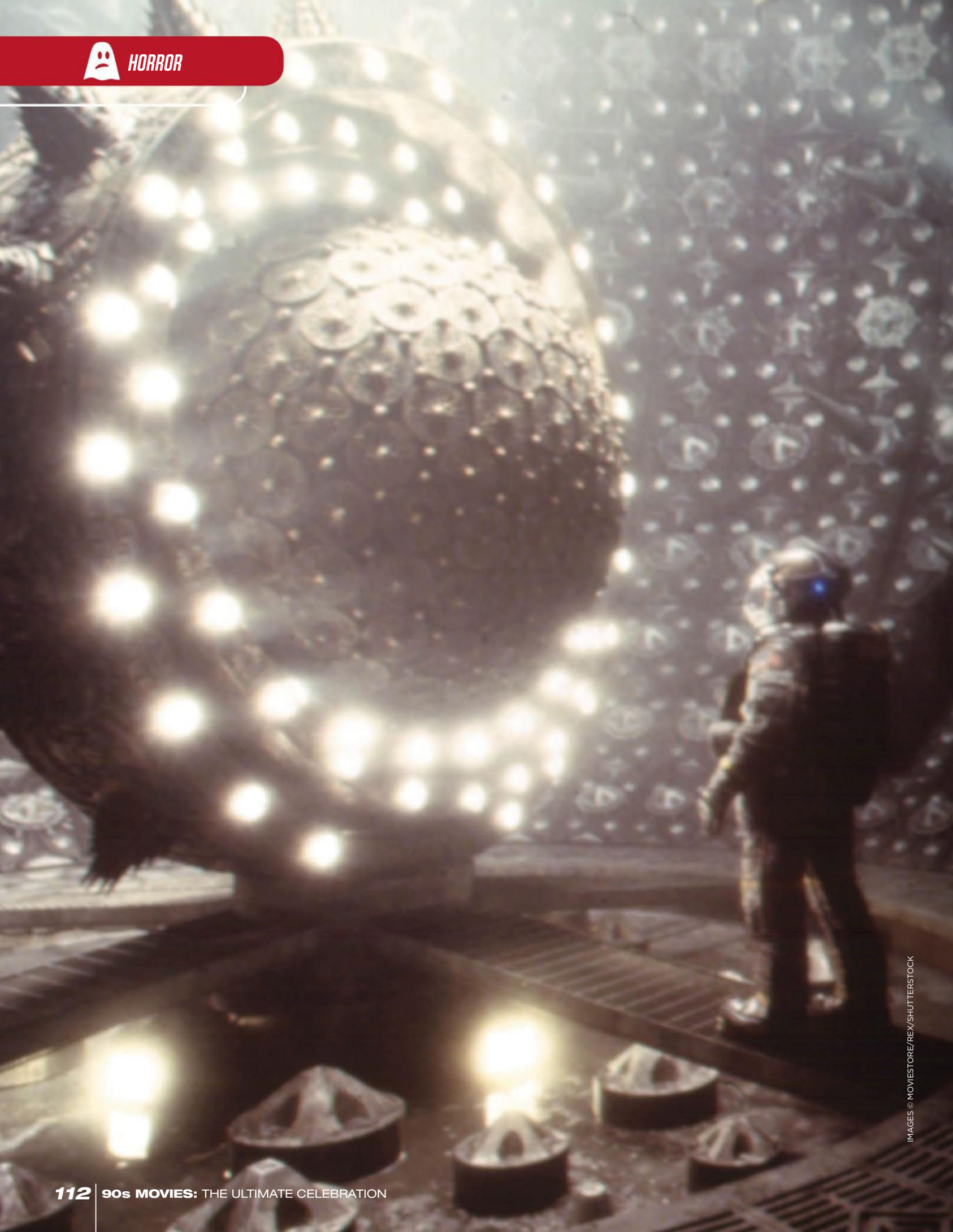


"There were a couple of really bad decisions made," says Steve Wilson of Sci-Fi (now Syfy) channel's *Tremors: The Series*. "We wanted to shoot in New Mexico, but Sci-Fi said, 'You'll shoot in Mexico, in six days not seven,' which any other normal show would get." Perhaps worst of all, episodes were transmitted out of order. "That was a battle we lost," admits Wilson.

"The second episode was supposed to be 'Shriek And Destroy' and the director had difficulty with the full-size Shrieker props. You either fix the problems and move forward or change the episode order, which we'd very carefully constructed to be shown in a certain way. Sci-Fi said, 'We don't care.'"

"All the network seemed to want was a monster of the week series, which became uncomfortably formulaic to me," says Michael Gross. "Though I was sorry to put Burt to rest after just 13 episodes, I didn't miss the mismatch of ideas. I'm still surprised how a network can hire a great creative team and tell them, 'We've hired you because of the wonderful things you've done – don't do them any more!' It was very frustrating."

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The Main Event

Back in 1997 Total Film talked to director Paul WS Anderson about his brooding, 18 certificate sci-fi horror Event Horizon, and found the Englishman determined to create a tense, edge-of-the-seat thrill ride for end of the century audiences...

WORDS JONATHAN MOSBY

THE PREMISE FOR *EVENT HORIZON* SMACKS OF A DEMONIC COUPLING BETWEEN *ALIEN* AND *THE SHINING*. But at least director Paul Anderson's biggest film to date retains the best elements of both, its dark and dirty vibe in direct contrast to recent slick 'n' glossy science fiction flicks. If *Independence Day* is *Star Wars* for the mid-'90s, then this tale about a mismatched crew on a dangerous deep space rescue mission who encounter more than they bargained for is reminiscent of... oh, but you guessed.

It has to be said, *Event Horizon*'s basic storyline doesn't appear that unique on paper. A missing prototype spaceship, the Event Horizon, has reappeared near Neptune after seven years. But when the crew sent to investigate arrive, they discover that while the ship seems to be empty, something is stalking them. What is it? And where are the original crew? But if you're expecting to hear about some sort of alien beastie skulking in the air vents at this stage, you'll find *Event Horizon* has a few tricks up its sleeve.

Director Paul WS Anderson (of *Mortal Kombat* and *Shopping* fame) expects the crowd for his third film to fall into one of two groups: those who dismiss it as little more than a catalogue of every old how-to-make-people-jump trick in the Tinseltown book, and others who simply enjoy the ride. But even the naysayers would have to admit that it's a much classier proposition than most straight-to-video sci-fi horrors.

"It appears to have gone down very well so far," Anderson laughs, "but it's hard to tell, because even if you enjoy the movie – and a lot of people seem to – it's not a film where you whoop and clap at the end. People are drained by it, and that was always the intention – by the end you feel like you've been in a spin-dryer for an hour-and-a-half."

ALL IN THE EDIT

Sounds easy, but it's a trick that most directors seem incapable of pulling off.

"It's absolutely down to the editing. The first cut of the film was about half-an-hour longer than it is now. One thing we did was tighten it up. The advantage of a shorter movie is that it's relentless – once it has you on the edge of your seat, it keeps you there. It doesn't allow time to relax before the next scare comes along, and that's down to the editing."

On the film's Pinewood set, actor Sam Neill told us that putting what's effectively a ghost story into an SF setting makes commercial sense. "Film – and television, I suppose, to a certain extent – are ideal media for sci-fi and fantasy in general. Film has infinite possibilities that are often restricted by the sort of people who make decisions about them – there is nothing that you can't do on film now.

"With computers you can produce the most fantastical things for reasonable money. That shot in *Independence Day* – was it the mothership? Anyhow, it was a big mother of a ship, whatever it was, crossing New York and casting a shadow across Manhattan Island – that was an extraordinary image that wouldn't have been possible with that veracity even only ten years ago.

"But that's the quicksand any maker of this type of film can very easily fall into, becoming all caught up with this amazing stuff. It's like being a child with incredible toys – it's easy to forget what the toys are for. That's something we all have to be extremely aware of, because in the end all the audience cares about – even though they love the pyrotechnics and thrills – is if it's a good story or not."

Event Horizon's had a fast turnaround, to say the least. At the studio in March (where the movie's huge and impressive sets conquered all Pinewood's available space, displacing →



Sam Neill and Richard T Jones ponder their horror hell.

other potential shoots, including the new Bond movie), everyone was aware the clock was ticking.

"We always knew that it would be an August release," Anderson says. "It was pushed back two weeks, but it's been a lot of hard work to get it ready for even that date. I came to England from Los Angeles about a year ago, having done some pre-production work there, and since then we have had to design and build the sets, shoot the movie, do the post-production and special effects – all in the space of 12 months. It's been a Herculean task, but we all knew the timescale, so worked 20-hour days.

ALL WORK NO PLAY

"When you are right in the middle of something like this, what else are you going to do? You can't have a social life when you're making this kind of film – at least I can't I have friends who direct and also go out to dinner. How the hell do they do that? I've always put 150% into everything I've ever done. I guess it's because it's always been my dream to be a film director, it's the only job I've ever wanted to do and I feel privileged being able to. I've been able, with *Event Horizon*, to spend $50 million making a science fiction film – a genre I love – and work with my wish list of actors. You get all that stuff. Why would you want to do anything else?"

"You're not sure what's going on or how it will play out – and that's scary"

So is *Event Horizon* a science fiction thriller, or simply a horror story that's coated with cosmic dust?

"What we are making is essentially a haunted house film like *The Haunting*, which is one of the best haunted house films ever made. It wasn't a big budget movie, but the way they lit it and shot it was very intelligently done. There was a sense of terror all the time. On the other hand you have, say, *Alien 3* where they had double the budgets of *Alien* and *Aliens* combined, yet it was a worse film because the previous ones had been so much better thought out. I think that one of the strengths of *Event Horizon* is it doesn't need to be a science fiction movie. It could be about a group of people aboard a minibus who head for a house on the moors. The owners are missing and there's some blood on the kitchen floor. The question is: what happened here?"

Jason Isaacs, who plays DJ, the rescue ship's medic, is in agreement: "I'm so glad we haven't got a man running around in a rubber suit playing the bad guy. This is spooky and you're not quite sure what's going on or why or how it will play out – and that's far more scary. I didn't at first immediately clock on to the story and how it was going to be sorted out at all. Instead, it deals with what frightens you, but doesn't do it on the screen – it's about what people conjure up to scare themselves. When my girlfriend and agent watched it for the first time, they were burying their head in their hands."

"Terror is very complex, technically," Anderson adds. "It's very much akin to comedy, in that if you do bad comedy, it really is bad. Everyone knows it's a joke, but it doesn't work. People laugh or they don't laugh – there's no middle ground. You can make a mediocre action movie and people can still enjoy it. But nobody enjoys mediocre comedy – there's no such thing. If the timing is wrong the gag falls flat on its face. And the same is true for horror. It could only be three frames – but if it's dragged out too long before the punch is delivered, you've failed. The trick's making something happen before people know it's coming. It requires a lot of thought and pre-planning. You can't just throw a ton of shit at the screen, and if it is not working, throw more money and more shit at it to fix it, because you'll just make it worse."

***Event Horizon* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.**

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THE BLAIR WIT

Ten years ago a no budget movie made by two film school graduates and featuring unknown actors conquered the world and scared your pants off. Calum Waddell looks back at The Blair Witch Project...

Ah, 1999.

It should have been the year of *Star Wars*. You can just imagine George Lucas, ensconced in Skywalker Ranch circa New Year, planning world domination all over again with his soon-to-be-unveiled masterpiece *The Phantom Menace*. Sure to be lauded as a creative genius for the introduction of Jar Jar Binks, the bearded billionaire probably entered January pondering how best to deal with the influx of front covers, award ceremonies, peace prizes and five star reviews poised to arrive in his direction.

Hindsight, of course, is a great thing. Because when 1999 came to a close there was indeed one film that everyone was speaking about. Unfortunately for our George, it was some cheapskate horror flick called *The Blair Witch Project* – made with the sort of cash that would barely cover the cost of Ewan McGregor's room service. More to the point, this super-low budget effort, which was largely shot on video, contained no star names and no special effects. Yet, after a packed-out premiere at January's Sundance Film Festival, *The Blair Witch Project* quickly became the subject of an intense bidding war (eventually won by the now defunct Artisan Entertainment) while rumours began to surface that the movie was a genuine 'snuff picture'. Thanks to an intense internet marketing campaign – which advertised the movie as actual 'found footage' – the hype leading up to *The Blair Witch Project*'s 30 July US release was astronomical (Brits, sadly, had to wait until Halloween).



Blair Witch creators Eduardo Sánchez and Daniel Myrick.



Heather Donahue, who played a character called... Heather Donahue.

It was, quite frankly, the must-see movie of the year, if not the decade...

GRABBING ATTENTION

"I think by virtue of being at Sundance, and a lot of the pre-buzz the film was getting before it premiered, we knew we had a potential sale," admits Dan Myrick, the co-writer and co-director of *The Blair Witch Project*. "I think that we thought we had a chance of being on the level of *Pi*, which had been a hit the year before. We believed we had something that was potentially successful – but only as an independent, arthouse film... What we did not prepare for was when *Blair Witch* began to break out the way it did. No-one anticipated how big that movie got." Indeed, by the end of the year *The Blair Witch Project* had taken in $250 →

CH PROJECT





Joshua Leonard, like his co-stars, delivered an all-too-real performance.

Michael Williams never quite made it to the A-list after *Blair Witch*.

The 'camcorder' vibe of the movie has been much imitated.



Memorable images – but did *Blair Witch* end up being too hyped up?

million worldwide and obtained the sort of critical plaudits that *The Phantom Menace* could only dream about...

Focusing on three young student filmmakers, Heather, Josh and Mike, who traipse into the woods of Burkittsville Maryland in an attempt to find out if the legend of the 'Blair Witch' is kosher, the fear-flick was that rare example of a modern horror outing which showed nothing in the way of blood or boobs. Alas, it also depended on the viewer having something approaching an imagination and soon there was a backlash from gorehounds wondering why all they got for their money was a bunch of twigs and trees...

"After its success at Sundance I think it was blown up and given to the masses who expect a set number of things from their scary movies," admits Ed Sánchez, the other writer/director behind *Blair Witch*. "When you big something up too much it eventually hurts it. For example, I saw *The Dark Knight* and it was a good film but the way people were talking about it I expected it to change my life. So I think the hype eventually hurt *Blair Witch*. It was a $30,000 film that somehow ended up in theatres all over the world. It became way too big for what it was intended for."

For those who *did* get lost in the feature's freaky sense of impending doom (and found themselves sleeping with the light on for days afterwards – thanks largely to what may be the most horrifying ending in cinema history), *The Blair Witch Project* more than deserved its success. "Some of the inspiration for *Blair Witch* came from the old *In Search Of...* series with Leonard Nimoy," admits Myrick. "They were quasi-documentaries that delved into everything from telekinesis to UFOs – but each episode was austere and pragmatic and, because of that, they felt real and authentic. That really freaked me out as a kid. Another influence was *The Legend Of Boggy Creek*, a movie which came out in the '70s and told of these filmmakers searching for Bigfoot. When I was a kid there were some scenes that really traumatised me and Ed and I wanted to try and recapture some of that. Really, part of our frustration was that back then nothing was scary. You were getting these big budget horror fests with big production values and lots of effects but they were not frightening. We wanted to get really primal with *Blair Witch* and bring that sense of fear back."

Certainly, without the postmodern jokes of *Scream*, or any spilt innards, *The Blair Witch Project* built its tension around the age-old fear of being lost, hungry and preyed upon by a force so omnipotent that all the tears, snot and shaky-cam confessions in the world cannot make it go away. Nevertheless, seasoned fright-fanatics still called 'foul' trying to claim some kind of link between these subtle shocks and the more juvenile, gross-out jolts of 1980's Italian 'video nasty' *Cannibal Holocaust*, a movie also based around 'found footage'. "There was no link between that film and us," maintains Sánchez. "But I remember that we got sent *Cannibal Holocaust* after *Blair Witch* was finished and we all thought 'wow' because it was basically the same idea. Dan and I thought it was pretty cool actually... Don't get me wrong, I did not like the fact they killed real animals in *Cannibal Holocaust*, but I thought some of the other stuff was quite clever. However, Dan and I came up with the idea for *Blair Witch* around about 1991 and we did not see *Cannibal Holocaust* until Sundance. It was banned so hardly anyone knew about it back then."

Part of the power of *The Blair Witch Project* was also in its acting, which was mostly

KEEP BROADCASTING

Was *Blair Witch* a true original, or did it borrow heavily from others?

When *Blair Witch* hit the big time everyone wanted to claim they had a part in the success, including the makers of 1998's *The Last Broadcast* – a mediocre mock-documentary about the search for the Jersey Devil. "We heard about *The Last Broadcast* a bit earlier than *Cannibal Holocaust*," admits Sánchez. "We finished *Blair Witch* at the end of 1997 and I remember there was a feature about *The Last Broadcast* in *Wired* magazine in February of 1998. We were editing our film at that point but we met the guys later at Sundance. There was some animosity – but, to be honest, if we were going to rip off anybody then we would have chosen *Cannibal Holocaust*. For all we know maybe *The Last Broadcast* did that."

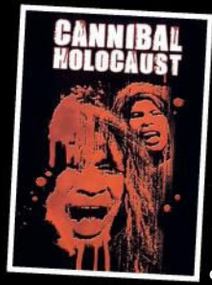
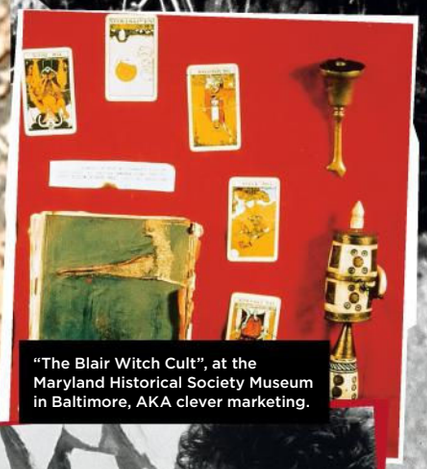


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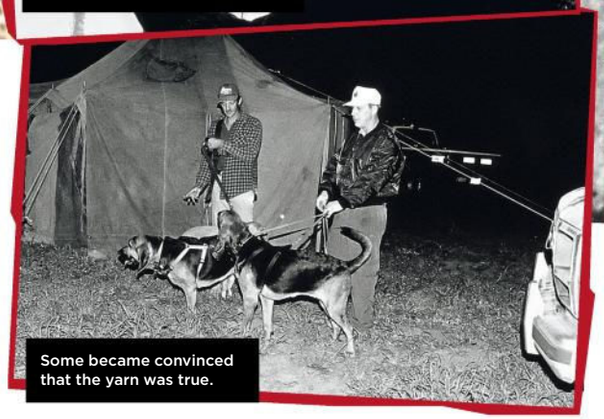




"The Blair Witch Cult", at the Maryland Historical Society Museum in Baltimore, AKA clever marketing.



Publicity material pretended the incidents were non-fictional.



Some became convinced that the yarn was true.

improvised. Who can ever forget Heather Donahue's ear-piercing shrieks or the sight of her mucus-covered kisser uttering an apology into the camera before she meets her demise? Sadly, despite giving dedicated and believable performances, the three stars – Donahue, Josh Leonard and Michael Williams – never did go on to A-list acting success. "It's an interesting thing isn't it?" reflects Myrick. "In some ways *Blair Witch* is still very misunderstood. I think they almost did too good a job as actors. People are still amazed when I tell them that we auditioned for over a year and saw 2,000 people for the parts. It took us that long to get down to Heather, Mike and Josh, who pulled off these adlibbed performances with such authenticity that a lot of people did not think they were acting at all. People in Hollywood are used to seeing actors through a certain sheen and veneer, which reminds them that they are watching a movie. *Blair Witch* removed that and made people feel like they were watching reality."

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Yet, 17 years later and the influence of *The Blair Witch Project* is unmistakable – as evidenced by such features as *Cloverfield*, *Diary Of The Dead*, *Quarantine* and *[REC]*, each of which uses the idea of handheld news footage to make their terrors feel all the more real. "I don't think that *Blair Witch* invented reality TV because it was there long before us," admits Sánchez. "For example, you had *Cops* and *The Real World*. But I think our movie had something to do with the reality boom and pushing people in that direction. I just wonder why it has taken so long for stuff like *Cloverfield* to come along [laughs]. Maybe when *Blair Witch* came out it was seen as a gimmick but since this stuff has become hot again there has been some interest in us doing a new first-person movie."

"WHO CAN FORGET HEATHER DONAHUE'S EAR-PIERCING SHRIEKS OR THE SIGHT OF HER MUCUS-COVERED KISSER?"

Hopefully this revelation may indicate a second lease of life for Myrick and Sánchez. The duo never did manage to capitalise on the success of *Blair Witch*. Taking a long lay off ("for the first time in our lives we had money," admits Sánchez) the two went their separate ways but, ultimately, ended up returning with a series of independently produced, direct-to-DVD genre efforts. For Myrick it was 2007's *Believers* and 2008's *Solstice*, whilst Sánchez called the shots on 2006's *Altered* and 2008's acclaimed *Seventh Moon*. "I wanted to wait until the *Blair Witch* phenomenon calmed down and then decide what to do," admits Myrick. "I wanted to visit some of my own concepts as well and, for better or worse, some of them were a lot of fun to make."

Sánchez, however, claims that the horrible experience of co-producing 2000's notoriously rushed follow-up *Book Of Shadows: Blair Witch 2* may have contributed to the duo's extended rest. "That was a case of making a movie for all of the wrong reasons," bemoans the director. "Artisan did not seem interested in making a good film. They wanted to do something that was going to make them a lot of money and which they could market the hell out of. It was a corporate plan."

That said, both admit that a return to Burkittsville is not entirely out of the question. "I would love to collaborate with Ed on more *Blair Witch* films," says Myrick. "We had an idea to do a prequel but Lionsgate now owns the franchise and when we approached them they passed on it." Even so, his co-conspirator is equally enthused. "The prequel takes place in the late 1700s," reveals Sánchez. "It's set in the middle of the winter in this township called Blair. It would be really scary and hardcore. I just wish we could get the money for it. Maybe someday..."

Clearly, there's life in the old witch yet...

IN THE SHADOWS

The sequel was a bit of a disaster...



Despite being made by respected documentary filmmaker Joe Berlinger, 2000's *Book Of Shadows: Blair Witch 2* is now the byword for "bad movies". A sort-of satire on "true-to-life" television features, the lambasted sequel actually has some interesting ideas in among the awfulness. "From a creative perspective the second film broke the mythology," admits Myrick. "It became self-referential, which is something we were never in agreement with. I think that in both the mainstream audience's eyes, and the *Blair Witch* fans, it just never satisfied anyone. But, hey, there are certainly worse movies out there..."



CULT

"The downside of coming off junk was I knew I would need to mix with my friends again in a state of full consciousness."

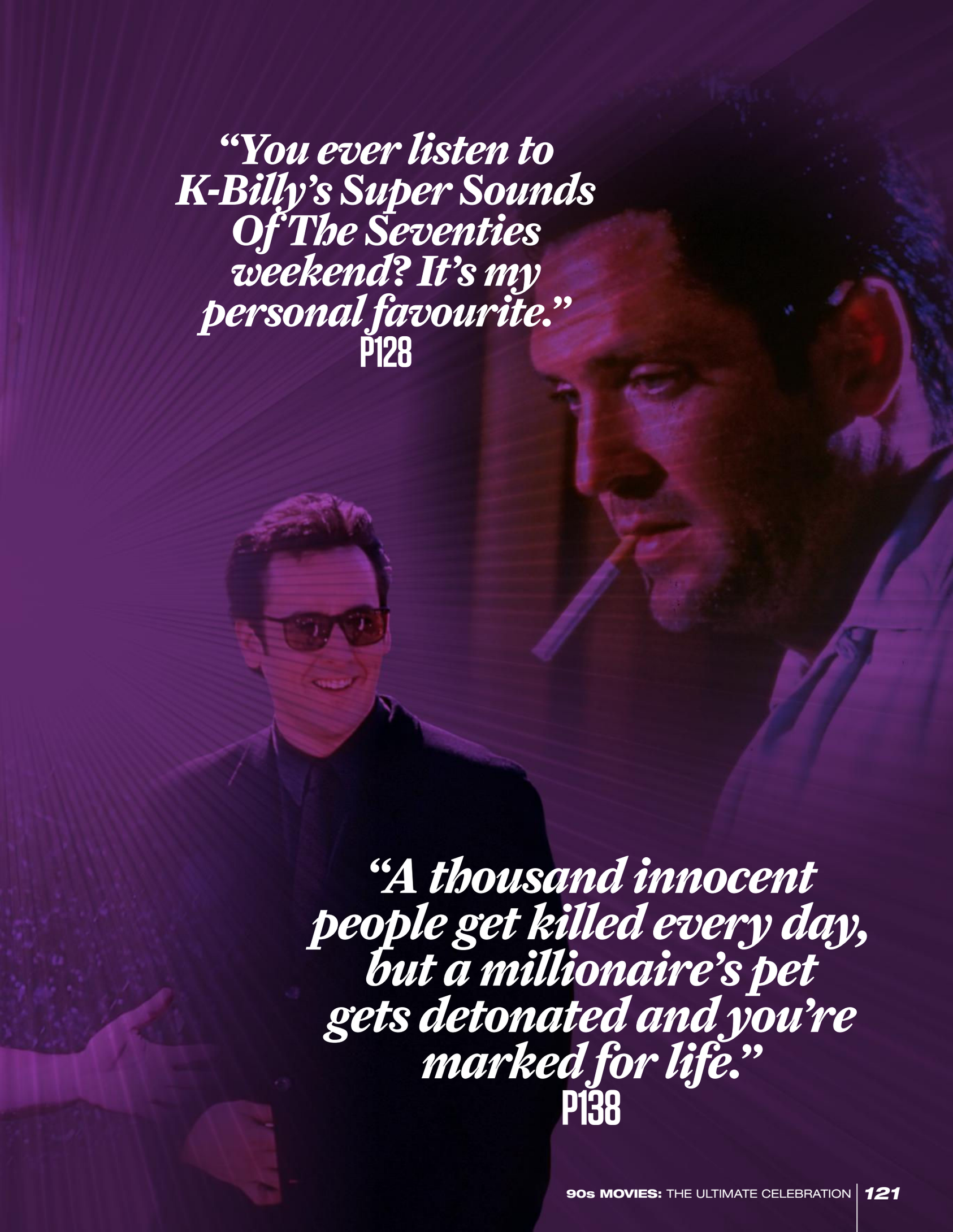
P136

"Get busy living, or get busy dying."

P134

"Listen up, maggots. You are not special. You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else."

P122



"You ever listen to K-Billy's Super Sounds Of The Seventies weekend? It's my personal favourite."
P128

"A thousand innocent people get killed every day, but a millionaire's pet gets detonated and you're marked for life."
P138



Battle Royale

At the end of the century, Fight Club knocked cinema reeling. Bring an ice pack as we revisit David Fincher's blistering masterpiece...

WORDS KEVIN HARLEY

I KNEW," DAVID FINCHER ONCE SAID, "JUST FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, THAT IF I COULD CHOOSE TO BE SOMEONE ELSE, IT WOULD BE BRAD PITT..." The self-awareness implied by that quote is scrawled all over Fincher's adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. It's a film that's acutely aware of itself as cinema, in its seductions, methods, subtexts. It knows its viewers, knows its moves, like a pro boxer knows their opponent. Never mind the moral furore it caused, hinged on accusations of a playground-nihilism-cum-lairy-playfulness that doesn't merit investigation: this Club knows the rules it's breaking.

On the surface, *Fight Club* is easy to get into. Plot-wise, it's about an alienated, unnamed 29-year-old wage slave (Edward Norton) losing sleep and faith in modern life. From there, it evolves as a satire on corporatism woven into a buddy-cum-lover's-triangle movie, before careening off into a parodic assault on ideas of selfhood via a mordantly funny satire on the myth of men in crisis. En route, it lays into a society obsessed with cleanliness, where sterility rules, where phrases such as "grande-latte enema" don't sound too fantastical – one whose "simple household items" could be used to make all kinds of wicked things. *Fight Club* met its millennial moment, then. Like *American Beauty*,



"David Fincher once said that, 'The real act of sedition is not to do the $3 million version, it's to do the big version.' On those terms, *Fight Club* is the state of the art of darkness"

it skewers late-20th-century malaise by having its lead character realise that life's accessories are "just stuff". The first twist, of course, is the extreme answer *Fight Club* conjures up. When Norton meets Brad Pitt's anarcho-punk Tyler Durden, they mark the encounter with a dust-up and a breathless "We should do this again sometime", before inviting hollow-souled suits to salvage the spunk from their catalogue lifestyles by pummelling other men purple in clandestine bouts of bare-knuckle boxing.

Then the idea spreads – and things get dark. As such, it's seditious enough. When Laura Ziskin, the then-head of Fox 2000, got hold of the property, she didn't even alert her bosses until she had Jim Uhls's script and a director attached. But *Fight Club* isn't just *Iron John* with knuckledusters on. As Helena Bonham Carter noted with regard to the tar-blackened role of Norton's fellow support-group junkie Marla Singer, that wouldn't be enough. "I thought it could be dangerous-provocative for provocative's sake," she said. "About how men who feel emasculated need to prove themselves violently, which I've always found faintly pathetic." You can see her point: note the in-joke of Norton's narrator almost assuming the names of characters Robert De Niro played in the '70s and you can picture *Taxi Driver* posters on student walls.

But *Fight Club*'s self-awareness transcends that. The opening trip through the inside of its narrator's brain and digital plummet through a skyscraper suggests as much. It's a ride, sure, with raved-up music to haul you on board. But it also implies the space that you're going into. As Fincher said, "The movie is about thought, about how this guy thinks. It's from his point of view, solely. It's a stream of consciousness."

Here, Fincher cuts loose and lairy from the convention that cinematic space is a reflection of what is 'real'. We're plunged, head-first, into psychological space – and fucked-up, pre-millennial, decidedly untrustworthy brain-space at that. Buckle up. Those who read the book before seeing the film would have noted the lineage of this idea. Palahniuk's corrosive novel chews heavily on literary notions of the unreliable narrator and the doppelgänger or 'double'. The idea stretches back to the serpent in the Bible, finds embodiment in Poe and Dostoevsky's dark fictions, and hits film via the wobbly mental states in film noir and Hitchcock. You could call it *Strangers On A Plane*.

Fincher doesn't simply lift the conceit, though. He finds its contemporary cinematic correlative and uses it as an excuse to behave with invigorating insolence towards the rules of cinema. His use of digital imagery isn't merely razzle-dazzle: it's there to make the ground under our feet shake. The idea that what you're seeing isn't necessarily true – even in terms of its own world – is one Fincher flagrantly toys with. Everyone notices the subliminal appearances of Durden before his proper entrance and we later witness the fun Durden has splicing lewd imagery into film reels. The suggestion is that he's continuously toying with the film we're watching, which reminds you of how Fincher's films tend to pivot on struggles for control of narrative space. Look at how Michael Douglas tussles to negotiate territory in *The Game*, for instance, or how Jodie Foster bests her attackers in *Panic Room* by manipulating the environment. In *Fight Club*, Fincher integrates the idea into plot via Pitt's tussles with Norton, and into form via Tyler's interjections.

And the twist? You knew it if you read the book before seeing the film, but it doesn't matter. *Fight Club*'s thrill lies less in its hoax mechanisms than in the sheer vim with which Fincher plugs its ideas into the possibilities of late-20th-century cinema. It's there in the way he toys with the pull of Pitt's Nietzsche-spouting nihilism and limber allure. It's there in the way he dissolves fantasy and 'real' worlds into one hyper-real, dreamlike state. And it's there in the way he stretches noir's use of voiceover and flashback in order to twist space and time to free-associative will. It's a headfuck.

Granted, it's a rollercoaster too: cruelly funny, acted with relish and savagely stylised. And it's thematically watertight, offering the ultimately responsible notion that if anyone is in crisis, charismatic star-figures and men's movements are no answer. But it's also less literal than that. It's a gut-level stab at turning Hollywood inside out from within via a kind of self-reflexive remix. Fincher once said that, "The real act of sedition is not to do the $3-million version, it's to do the big version." On those terms, *Fight Club* is the state of the art of darkness. It knows what happens when the lights go down and isn't afraid of getting its hands dirty. No wonder the moralists had been left reeling. *Fight Club* is way too fast. 90s

NEED TO KNOW

YEAR 1999

Running time *133 mins*
Director *David Fincher*
Starring *Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham Carter, Jared Leto*
Tagline *Mischief. Mayhem. Soap.*

BEST LINE
Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt):
"All the ways you wish you could be, that's me. I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you are not."

CRITICAL MASS
"Pulls you in, challenges your prejudices, rocks your world and leaves you laughing in the face of an abyss. It's alive, all right."
Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

BEST BUY Region B Blu-ray



Terrorism: the shop front is destroyed.

Balls to Starbucks

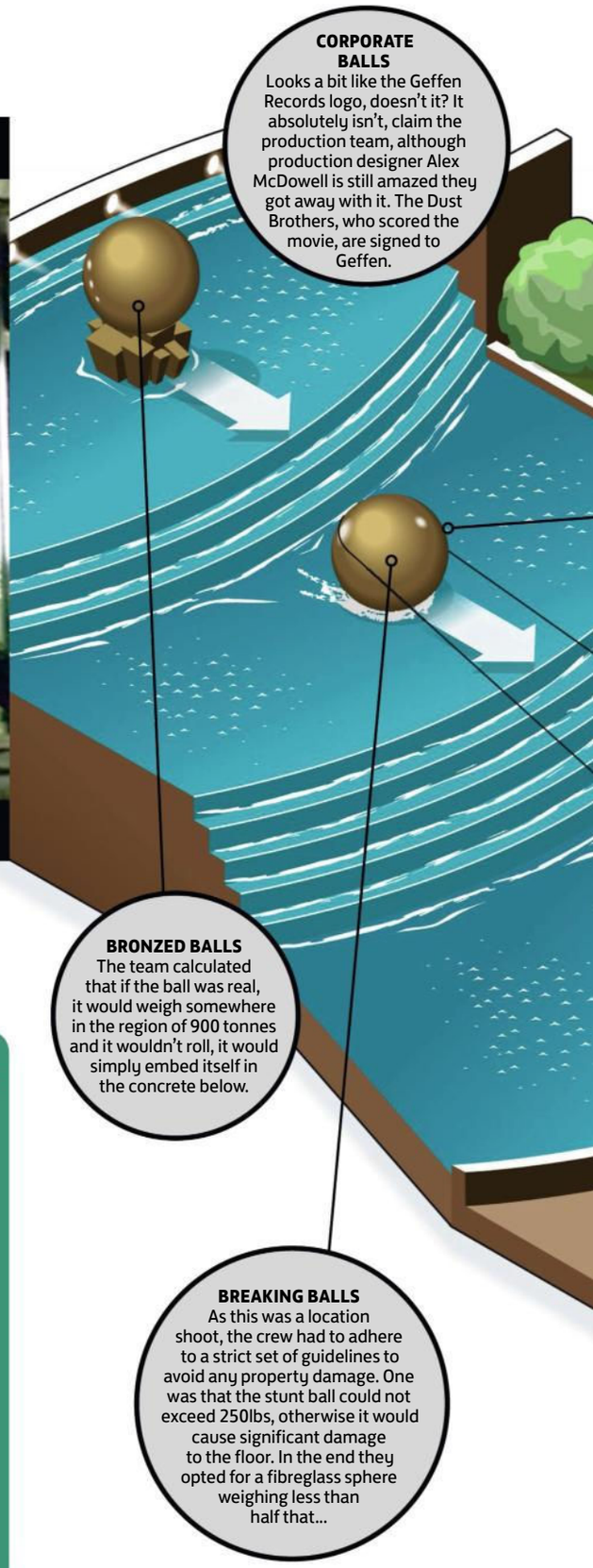
FIGHT CLUB | *Former ad director David Fincher smashes us with anti-corporate rhetoric.*

An adaptation of a grisly, blood-soaked manifesto for the post-modern male by controversy magnet Chuck Palahniuk, helmed by a director who had been savagely critical of the failings of studio execs: *Fight Club* was definitely a touchy subject at 20th Century Fox. Confused about how to flog something that wanted to choke the life out of marketing strategies, they almost hobbled the movie with a campaign designed to lure fans of UFC and a Saturday night punch-up. *Fight Club*, somewhat inevitably, took a sound thrashing on release. The thing was, however, everyone kept breaking the first rule of *Fight Club*; they just couldn't stop talking about it. This fervent buzz and a major technological revolution taking place in the front room – the advent of DVD – helped redefine the concept of the cult movie and ensured *Fight Club*'s remarkable success both critically and, eventually, commercially, becoming the most essential movie of the 90s. **Ali Upham**

***Fight Club* is available on Blu-ray and DVD.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- While still working 12-hour stints on *The Game*, Fincher had one night to read the book and tell producer Josh Donen how he might go about adapting it.
- Tyler Durden appears in the film a total of five times before we see him at the airport. On four occasions it's as a single frame – when the transfer went out for quality checks a lot of the feedback stated there was dirt on the print – and once as a waiter on the hotel's welcome video.
- Fincher cast Meat Loaf after seeing a VH1 special on the big-boned "Bat Out Of Hell" warbler.
- Meat Loaf's fat-suit with the boobs was filled with sand to give it a pendulous quality. It weighed more than 100lb.



CORPORATE BALLS
Looks a bit like the Geffen Records logo, doesn't it? It absolutely isn't, claim the production team, although production designer Alex McDowell is still amazed they got away with it. The Dust Brothers, who scored the movie, are signed to Geffen.

BRONZED BALLS
The team calculated that if the ball was real, it would weigh somewhere in the region of 900 tonnes and it wouldn't roll, it would simply embed itself in the concrete below.

BREAKING BALLS
As this was a location shoot, the crew had to adhere to a strict set of guidelines to avoid any property damage. One was that the stunt ball could not exceed 250lbs, otherwise it would cause significant damage to the floor. In the end they opted for a fibreglass sphere weighing less than half that...





"If we were going to kill someone off, if we were going to kill Bob, it had to mean something."

David Fincher, director





"David offered the body [*prosthetic of Meat Loaf's character, Bob*] to Planet Hollywood if they'd serve guacamole out of the head."

Chuck Palahniuk, author





"I found the film intensely funny, but there was a message that could be misunderstood. I admired its boldness, but knew it needed careful, responsible handling."

Helena Bonham Carter, actress





"I said to Fincher if we get this right, if we get the tone of this right, it'll be just like *The Graduate*... The story of youthful dislocation and feeling out of sync with the value system you're expected to engage in."

Edward Norton, actor

FLOATING BALLS
One of the main issues with using such a lightweight ball, however, was that when it actually hit the water, it floated. To remedy this, two of the FX team had to drag it across the surface with guide ropes, all of which was then removed in post.

SEND IN THE CLOWNS
Bob's character arc was inspired by a clown in a Cirque du Soleil performance which Fincher had seen shortly before making *Fight Club*.

GROUND ROAST
Although Starbucks were, as Fincher puts it, happy to be in just about every shot of the movie, they drew the line at having one of their franchises wrecked by anarchists, perhaps understandably. 'Gratifico' coffee takes its place.

DIGITAL BALLS
Originally Fincher conceived this whole scene as an effects shot, and it took everyone else on the production to convince him otherwise. In the end, the nightmare shoot had to be supplemented with digital effects, anyway; the steps breaking, the flickering lights and the shaking camera were all added to give the ball more heft.

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS

We Need To Talk About Kevin

In this fascinating interview from 1997, when Chasing Amy was about to be released, Kevin Smith sounds off on a number of spicy subjects

WORDS CAM WINSTANLEY

DIDN'T SEE *CLERKS*, *MALLRATS* OR *CHASING AMY*? YOUR LOSS, PALLY BOY. All three deal with drippy stuff like boy/girl (or boy/girl/girl) relationships, and coming to terms with adulthood – but they're not the hook. You remember Smith's cameos as Silent Bob, necrophilia in toilets, comic book conversation and killer lines you wish *you'd* said.

***Chasing Amy* features an awesome sex-related injury conversation. Do you have any?**
I wish I did, but I don't. I had rug burn on my back a few times, but it didn't last.

That runs in to a Banky/Alyssia talk about sex. Being English, and thus repressed, it's hard to believe two people of the opposite sex could talk like that. Do they in New Jersey?
Oh absolutely, but it just comes down to who you're with. Every so often you come across a wonderful, wonderful woman who you can talk to like one of the guys. And there's not this kind of gender hang-up thing where you just sit there, and you're not like, "Oh my God, does she think I'm coming onto her?" It's necessary, because in order to improve as a lover, one always has to be constantly asking the important questions of the opposite sex. They have all the answers, right?

There's a famous comedy set where this guy talks about how women will tell their friends and their sisters and their mothers what guys do wrong. And it's like, "Why don't you just tell us?" We're the ones that fuck you.

Plus, it's basically one of the only things we've got to talk about in life. Sex is ever fascinating, and it's one of those things we'd rather talk about than do. Doing it takes too much energy, talking about it doesn't take nearly as much energy and is usually more fun.

Your films all take characters who are in that slacker limbo between college and getting a career. As you get older, isn't it going to be harder to maintain that post-college thing?
Hopefully, the older I get, the more I'll want to talk about what's interesting me at that time. Stuff like this – if I'm still doing it when I'm 40 – shoot me. I don't want to be King Slacker when I'm 40. If all of this stuff is still going on in my life then definitely kill me.

IMAGE © MOVIESTORE COLLECTION/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Mallrats bombed almost everywhere. Was that the film you wanted to make, or was it all twisted up by the studio?
Yes and no. The screenwriting process, the studio pulled out anything that made it stand out. But they never bothered us during filming or editing, so it's hard to sit here and say that the studio bastardised that movie.

But there was a thing that made sense to the studio, but didn't make sense to me. They went, "Don't you want this movie to reach the widest possible audience? If you take stuff like this out and move this and change that a bit, you're not alienating these people, and they're coming to see your movie." In the end it didn't make sense to me, because I think I make movies that I like to see and that my friends like to see, but that aren't for everybody. *Jurassic Park* wasn't for everybody. There are still cats out there that haven't seen *Jurassic Park*. Not as many as those that haven't seen *Chasing Amy* or *Mallrats*, but still. So I just don't see the philosophy of making a movie that'll reach the widest possible audience. We made three million dollars theatrically with *Clerks* – that was the widest possible audience for that movie at that time.

There's a fair degree of jealousy in all your films. There's the famous 36 dicks scene in _Clerks_, when Dante freaks out about the number of men his girlfriend's been with...
Yeah, and *Chasing Amy*'s kind of just an extension of that. This movie was just a nice way to exorcise the demons of insecurity so that I would never have to talk about that subject again. One would imagine it has to be out of my system by now. If it's not, then I feel sorry for me.

They also all have _Star Wars_ talks.
Yeah, I'm done with that. At the time we did *Clerks*, nobody was talking about *Star Wars* any more and it was pretty neat. During *Clerks*, you couldn't go into a store and buy something with *Star Wars* on it because there was so little merchandise. Now it's everywhere. So that, coupled with the fact that – how many times can you kick that dog? – there's no need to talk about it any more.

What did you think of the Special Editions?
Not a hell of a lot. I thought the best one was *Empire*, because they didn't do all that much with it. My take on the trilogy is a lot of people think I'm a huge *Star Wars* fan. I love *The Empire Strikes Back*, I think it's a wonderful movie, very nearly perfect. *Star Wars* and *Return Of The Jedi* are really tough to sit through – they're rocky to boring. As for the prequels, I think my interest has waned since I was a child. I can't see them being bad movies, but you're talking about Darth Vaderless flicks. How interesting can they be?

Are there any kind of films you think you couldn't make?
Any blockbuster. I don't think I have the talent or ability to make a *Face/Off*. Or even the patience. Ben Affleck – from *Chasing Amy* – he's working on *Armageddon*. He said they'd shot for two weeks, and not done a word of dialogue yet, just running around in front of green screens.

So the bottom line is that you're a writer/director?
Well, I write for hire, but I would never be a director for hire. Offers have come down, really tempting offers, and it's sometimes hard to say no just because there's a lot of money involved. It's like somebody said, "Hey man, here's $10 million, will you suck a dick?" You'd certainly give it some thought before you said no. And if somebody's "Here's two million dollars, you want to direct an Eddie Murphy movie?" I give it a thought, and then I say no.

In your intro to Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's comic book _Preacher_, you say that you know in your heart that God is a _Preacher_ fan. That's a controversial statement...
I just think that God is a fan of anything that's well-written and thought out. *Preacher*'s a very irreverent book, but in the end it doesn't cross a certain line. And at least it's talking and thinking about religion. You have to think that when Christ walked the Earth, he talked about faith in radical terms, and at the time, people thought he was blasphemous. So nowadays when you have people talking about faith in radical terms, again, they're accused of blasphemy.

"_Star Wars_ and _Return Of The Jedi_ are really tough to sit through – they're rocky to boring. But I think _Empire_ is a wonderful movie"

You did a draft for the new Superman film...
Believe me man, it ain't going to be the draft. They moved on. I did my two contracted drafts that Warner Brothers really, really loved, and then Tim Burton got involved, and wanted my shit off the project. I'm not in the loop, and from what I understand, the script's really bad now. Tim and the writer Wesley Strick have gotten in there and apparently fucked it up royal. So I don't hold much hope for the Superman movie.

Do you think there's always going to be a constant battle between comic book fans and filmgoers, and the filmgoers are always going to get their way with the adaptation?
There's far more of them than there are of us. People ask all the time in the world of comics – why can't they do Batman like *The Dark Knight Returns*? Why can't they get it right? And *Batman* came awfully close, probably as close to its source material as any comic book adaptation, with the exception perhaps of *The Rocketeer*. But in the end you've got to realise that you're talking to an audience that doesn't know the complete history of that character.

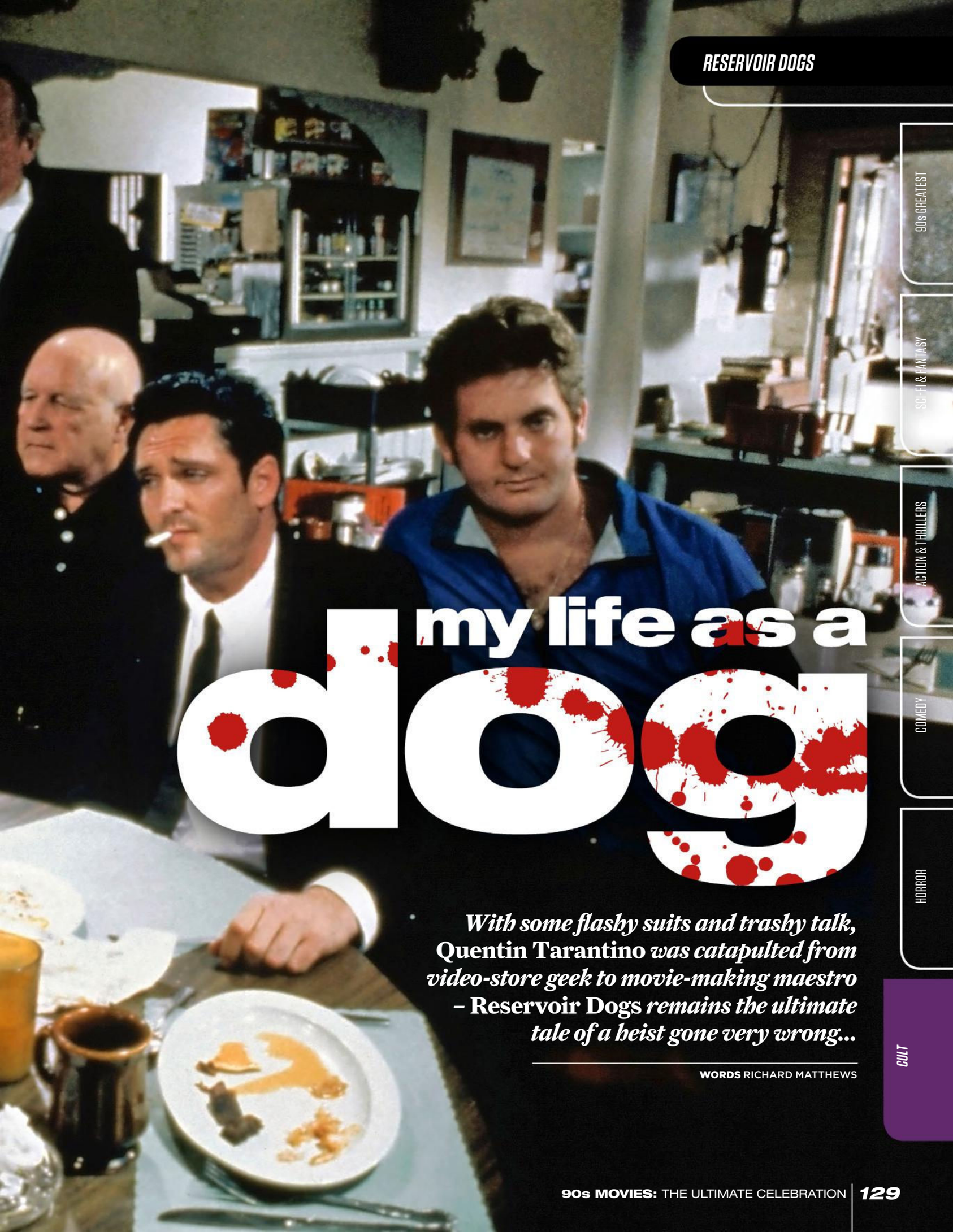
Do you think it's geeky for comic book fans to expect films to stay true to the comics?
I don't think it's geeky, I just think it's a little unreasonable. If they were making the movie for two million bucks, then they could stay as true to the comic as they wanted, because they'd make their money back. But in a world where you're making a movie for $100 million it's got to be for everyone. That's the philosophy. Now is it a good philosophy? No, it's a business philosophy. Do I condone it? No, because then you've got crap like *Batman & Robin*. At the same time, they made that movie for everybody, yet nobody was into it. If the studios would talk to film and comic fans, maybe they would think twice about investing so much money into such a feeble effort.

Spawn and _Steel_ have done little business, _Batman & Robin_ was useless – do you think that the entire comic book adaptation thing is a dead-end street?
Any comic book movie is better than no comic book movie. Except for *Batman & Robin*. But I think they've just run out of ideas. For a studio that has no good or original ideas, comic books are a wonderful place to mine big event movies. But again they try to reach as wide an audience as possible. I say cut down the cost of the movies and make them quality – don't worry about reaching ma and pa and three point two kids. But they just say "Who does everyone know? Superman. Okay, so let's do it again." It was less than 20 years ago that we had a Superman movie, and already they're recreating the franchise, because they don't want to try new stuff. But let's try something else – Green Lantern or Aquaman.

Did you see any similarities between _Preacher_ and _Dogma_?
The first time I read *Preacher* I went, "Fuck!" because it reminded me so much of *Dogma*, which I'd just written. But then I realised that there was room for more stuff like this. *Dogma*'s this apocalyptic road movie. It's very close to a comic book, doesn't deal with relationships and doesn't really deal with the real world. Even something as implausible as *Mallrats* is still a day-in-the-life movie, it could take place. *Dogma* couldn't, it's fictional stuff – angels and demons.

Jay's the character in all the films that males seem to love and females absolutely detest.
Alanis Morissette loved the movie and hated Jason, she said that he terrified her for some reason. It's funny because there's this identity factor. People keep saying to me, "I know a dude just like Jay". So apparently there are more of him out there.





my life as a dog

With some flashy suits and trashy talk,* Quentin Tarantino *was catapulted from video-store geek to movie-making maestro* – Reservoir Dogs *remains the ultimate tale of a heist gone very wrong...

WORDS RICHARD MATTHEWS

You don't see the ear being cut off. If one thing is testament to the power of Quentin Tarantino's triumphant 1992 directorial debut, it's the debate surrounding the movie's most notorious scene. In a career-defining turn, Michael Madsen dances to Steeler's Wheel's 'Stuck In The Middle With You' as Mr Blonde, sociopathic bank robber, wielding a straight razor, preparing to torture captured cop Marvin Nash (Kirk Balz). He sashays. He grooves. He straddles Marvin and gets to work... and the camera pans away. We stare at a warehouse wall as Marvin screams in pain. Madsen walks back into frame carrying the detached lobe – and yet people all over the world swear blind they saw Madsen hack it off...

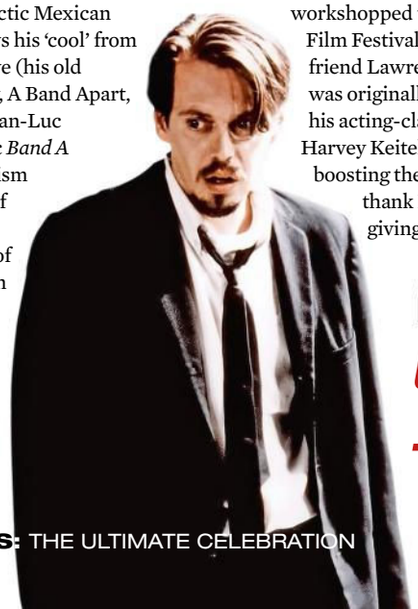


Horror amongst thieves: the climactic Mexican stand-off ends the movie...

Let's go to work

Such was the strength of the atmosphere Tarantino had created – in a film peppered with blood, violence and profanity, how could they not have seen it? Because Tarantino has never been your common-or-garden filmmaker – and he was was set to make to make even bigger waves with his follow-up, *Pulp Fiction*, in 1994. Already, the Tarantino hallmarks are present and correct in *Dogs* – criminals, ultraviolence, pop-culture-saturated conversation, florid vernacular and a love of tinkering with narrative structure – in this case shedding light on his anonymous hoods with multiple flashbacks and chapter headings. *Dogs* remains one of the definitive American debuts, up there with Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* and Steven Spielberg's *Duel*. It changed the course of American independent film, with Tarantino joined by the likes of Robert Rodriguez, Kevin Smith and Richard Linklater in shaping a new movement in cool counter-culture cinema. Tarantino was a true model of the new film culture, mining influences from all strands of cinema and transfusing them in a fresh and interesting way to create his own distinct cinematic thumbprint.

In the case of *Dogs*, Tarantino's failed-heist caper bears a debt to Hong Kong action movies, particularly Ringo Lam's *City On Fire*, from which QT lifted the undercover-cop plot thread and the climactic Mexican stand-off. He borrows his 'cool' from the French New Wave (his old production company, A Band Apart, was a reference to Jean-Luc Godard's 1964 classic *Band A Parte*) and his brutalism from the pulp films of Samuel Fuller. His response to charges of plagiarism are brazen ("I steal from every movie ever made"), claiming the right of the artist to pay homage. He revels in using Jean-Luc Godard-style montages, jumping back and forth through the story and never showing us the actual heist, whilst his characters, with their colour-coded monikers reminiscent of Joseph Sargent's *The Taking Of Pelham One Two Three*, dress in the cool-as-a-cucumber black suits of John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*.



Radio days

Ex-movie-store clerk Tarantino had made ground as a screenwriter selling *True Romance* and *Natural Born Killers* in the early '90s, but always chomping at the bit to direct his own work. He workshopped the *Dogs* script at the Sundance Film Festival, intent on filming it on 16mm with friend Lawrence Bender for $30,000. Bender was originally slated to play Nice Guy Eddie but his acting-class teacher's wife gave the script to Harvey Keitel, who championed the film, boosting the budget to $1.2 million. We can thank Keitel's eye for good material for giving us Tarantino – for his foresight, Harvey regained his street cred which had eroded since the early '70s. The film opens with a clear stylistic declaration: this is the essence of cool. Normally what is or isn't 'cool' lies in the eye of the beholder but the dense verbiage of the opening diner discussion of Madonna's 'Like A Virgin' segueing into the slow- motion strut of the gang through the parking lot to 'Little Green Bag' was instantly iconic – and a jolt to the heart of indie cinema. You really could be dialogue-focused and character-driven and still have cool shots and explosive violence, it said. *The New York Daily News*' Jami Bernard described how the first Sundance audience were in no way prepared for what they were about to see... "They didn't know what to make of it. It's like the first silent movie when audiences saw the train coming towards the camera and scattered."

Dogs is also a masterclass in low-budget filmmaking: predominantly one location (the warehouse); a small ensemble of classy supporting actors with one big name (Keitel);

"THE SLOW-MOTION STRUT OF THE GANG TO 'LITTLE GREEN BAG' WAS A JOLT TO THE HEART OF INDIE CINEMA"



a talking point (the ear-cutting scene) and amazingly quotable dialogue ("Somebody's shoved a red-hot poker up our ass and I want to know whose name is on the handle!"). The cherry on the top is Tarantino's sublime use of music via the fictional K-Billy's 'Super Sounds Of The '70s' radio show, beautifully introduced by deadpan comedian Steve Wright. Tarantino's ear for a catchy vintage track that effortlessly captures the onscreen vibe is second only to Martin Scorsese. 'Little Green Bag' and 'Stuck In The Middle With You' are now playlist classics, songs that instantly conjure the tang of Tarantino's groove, something he has carried through to all his films.

Doggie style

If Tarantino embraced the sentiment that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the stampede of copycats that flooded screens during the '90s took it a little literally, eventually devaluing the label 'Tarantino-esque' before QT even had time to relish his own impact. *Six Days In The Valley*, *Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead*, the Elmore Leonard revival begun by *Get Shorty*, *3,000 Miles To Graceland*, Christopher McQuarrie's *The Way Of The Gun*, even *The Usual Suspects*, all owe a debt to Tarantino. The man himself even purloined his own reputation to bankroll the likes of Roger Avary's *Killing Zoe* and by the time Robert Rodriguez stepped in to direct Tarantino's *From Dusk Till Dawn* script (which Tarantino starred in) in 1996, QT's take on cool-as-ice criminality played like a parody. From then on, The Chin's movies began to change, building to the monumental Asian-cinema mash-up of *Kill Bill*, and more recently his epic Westerns *Django Unchained* and *The Hateful Eight*. *Dogs* itself has been name-checked extensively, in everything from *Swingers* to *Red Dwarf* and *Father Ted*. But you know you've really made it when you're pastiched on *The Simpsons*, an honour afforded the ear-cutting scene, re-enacted by Itchy & Scratchy and ending with the anarchic duo decapitating Tarantino. And that act of violence most definitely was seen on camera. In the end, a film lives or dies on its durability. A good film can wane over time, drift from people's minds and disappear. But a classic holds firm or increases in reputation as its cultural impact can be assessed with the 20-20 vision of retrospection. Twenty-four years later *Reservoir Dogs* remains one of the best of the early-'90s indie breakouts. *Pulp Fiction* grabs more headlines, but *Dogs* is tighter, leaner, sharper – with less finesse and grace, it's still a thing of raw, ferocious beauty. And it came first. *Dogs* still explodes over the screen, rising above the quagmire of its imitators. "Violence is one of the most fun things to watch," said Tarantino. *Reservoir Dogs* picks up that baton, then batters you over the head with it.

LISTEN UP!

Five classic characters from Tarantino's mad world...



JULES WINNFIELD (SAMUEL L JACKSON IN *PULP FICTION*)
"I will strike down up on thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who would attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee." Just like his wallet says, Jules is one ice-cool Bad Motherfucker.



VIC VEGA, AKA MR BLONDE (MICHAEL MADSEN IN *RESERVOIR DOGS*)
Brother of Travolta's Vincent, Vic knows how to strut his stuff, even if he's a bit of an ear fetishist. After patiently listening to Harvey Keitel's Mr White laying into him, your blood turns cold when he finally replies, "Are you gonna bark all day little doggie, or are you gonna bite?"



CLARENCE WORLEY (CHRISTIAN SLATER IN *TRUE ROMANCE*)
Elvis-obsessed comic-book store employee Clarence really grabs life by the horns when he marries hooker Alabama (Patricia Arquette), kills her pimp (Gary Oldman) and makes off with his coke, the Mob hot on his tail. As the King says, "I like you, Clarence... always have, always will."



BEATRIX KIDDO, AKA THE BRIDE (UMA THURMAN IN *KILL BILL*)
This former Deadly Viper Assassination Squad member is out for revenge on former lover and boss Bill, and on any bloody fool who didn't intervene when he gunned her down. From her first toe-wiggle to her grave escape to her whirling-dervish swordfight with the Crazy 88, The Bride prevails.



SETH GECKO (GEORGE CLOONEY IN *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*)
Clooney's break out movie role cast him as a hood on the lam with his psycho rapist brother Richie (Tarantino). Seth wants to be a smooth criminal but is constantly undermined by his sibling. But when Seth tells you "Be cool. Everyone... Be. Cool," you know no one is gonna be as cool as him.

IMAGES © ALLSTAR; KOBAL COLLECTION



QUENTIN TARANTINO

He's an icon of the '90s who's gone from strength to strength – we chat to QT about his influences and inspirations...

WORDS JONATHAN CROCKER

➜What was it like working in the video store? Before I worked at Video Archives, I'd get the TV guide every week and read it cover to cover. But then I had access to all these great films and terrific directors. I'd watch them every day. So I'd become a fan of [French New Wave director] Eric Rohmer. And just watch one movie after another and work through different directors' careers.

➜Which directors influenced you most when you were growing up? Brian De Palma, Sergio Leone and Howard Hawks were way, way up there for me. As much as I adored Scorsese, when it comes to the movie brats, you pick your favourite. And everyone's favourite was Scorsese. But De Palma was a kind of rock star of the current directors. And it was probably because my work was closer to Scorsese's and I didn't want to give him too much credit, even though I secretly adored him!

➜ Is it true you studied acting for six years before directing? I would actually recommend anybody who wants to start a director career or a writer career, rather than start off trying to taking writing classes – which I don't even know what the hell that is – or directing classes, I would suggest you join an acting class. Everything I've learned about writing, I learned from acting. When I write, I basically just get lost in what the characters are doing. Which is what you try to do when you're acting. You lose yourself.

➜ You never finished your first film, *My Best Friend's Birthday*. What do you think of it now? The footage from the first two weeks of shooting was the first time I'd done anything. It looks very, very amateur. It's cute, but it's amateur. But cut to two and a half years later, when I'm writing more scenes and I'm shooting at the weekend, now that stuff in the film isn't bad. I'd learned what I was doing a little bit. They were scenes. They were okay. I'd learned...

➜ Why do you think *Reservoir Dogs* was so controversial when it was released? Because it's real. The bullets aren't movie bullets. When Mr Orange gets shot in the stomach, it's slow death and pain every step of the way. I was trying to dramatise that and not bullshit around. How can you keep a scene going when you have a guy just screaming? You just go for it. It might get ugly but that's what happens when people get shot.

➜ When did you first have the idea for *Pulp Fiction*? Well, I came up with the scene when Vince goes to Mia's house when I was 24. And I was 29 when I made the movie. I had an idea for a clichéd movie, a guy hanging out with a gangster's wife but who couldn't touch her. I wrote that sequence and I never wrote anything more. But I'd written and visualised everything: she's watching him, like a cat playing with a mouse, it's 'Son Of A Preacher Man' playing...

➜ *Jackie Brown* is a much quieter, more adult movie. Is it more personal? For a start, it's set in the area where I grew up, this area by LAX. It hasn't been used that much in movies – I think Robert Towne used it in *Tequila Sunrise*. I saw a million movies at that same theatre that Robert Forster visits in the film. I worked in that mall for three years. I was there every day for three years.

➜ In the book, Jackie is white. Why did you change that? For the most part, I try to keep the character and find the perfect fit as an actor. I had to figure out a woman that I could cast at that age: late-forties, still attractive and could handle anything. And I thought, well, that sounds like Pam Grier. And I've always adored Pam Grier. Then all of a sudden the idea of casting Pam Grier sounded like a cool idea. So I stuck to that. But instead of a pornographic, exploitation, blaxploitation, violence extravaganza, I did a more realistic version of that. She's a working girl trying to get by.

➜ How was it adapting someone else's work for the first time? It was very different. One of the things I've avoided in my scripts is exposition sequences. They're always disguised. But with the novel, they're there to keep the plot going. But Elmore Leonard was a terrific writer and a big influence on my writing style. He would set up a standard genre story and then he would have real life come in and fuck up everything.

➜ What have you learned from all the film festivals over the years? They tell you at Sundance: we want you to get out of this, whatever YOU want to get out of this. We want you to TRY different things. They have a bunch of resource directors there. In the first group, Monte Hellman was there and a lot of other people. And they HATED it. The cinematographer said, 'Not only is this scene horrible, if you do this in real life, they're going to fire you.' So I go and take a long solitary walk with myself in the woods. And I think, 'I like my scene. I was experimenting with long takes. That's what I was doing.' Then the next group comes in, including Terry Gilliam... We're kind of down, we figure everybody's gonna hate our shit and that's the way it's gonna be. And then Terry Gilliam goes, 'AAAH! Your scene's just great! Never in my life have I experienced black and white in quite that way.' So I took another walk in the woods. And I thought, 'You know, that's gonna be my career. Either people are gonna really like me or they're really not. Just get fucking used to it. This is the deal.' 90s



Perfect getaway: Tim Robbins finds freedom.

Prison break

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

Hope can set you free.

But a massive tunnel helps. "Fear can hold you prisoner," starts the tagline to writer/director Frank Darabont's glorious 1994 prison drama, adapted from Stephen King's novella. It certainly doesn't skimp on the fear. The greatest piece of movie misdirection since Keyser Söze got busy hobbling sees long-suffering inmate Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) mutely clutching a length of rope at lights-out, after 20 years of unjust incarceration. "Every man has his breaking point," rues Andy's fellow lifer, Red (Morgan Freeman). What follows isn't suicide, but salvation. Hidden behind a Raquel Welch *One Million Years BC* poster is Andy's hand-excavated tunnel, which will take him, via a sewage pipe spanning "500 yards of shit-smelling foulness", to freedom. It's the ultimate triumph over adversity – something the film managed too. A flop on release, regaining only $18m of its $25m budget, Darabont's debut floundered at the Oscars (winning zero from seven noms) before soaring on video. Seems hope really can set you free. **Matt Glasby**

***The Shawshank Redemption* is available on DVD and Blu-ray.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- In the early 1980s, King sold the young Darabont the rights to another story, 'The Woman In The Room', for just $1. He loved the resulting 30-minute flick, which was Oscar shortlisted and is viewable online.
- *Different Seasons*, a collection of four novellas, spawned Rob Reiner's gorgeous *Stand By Me* in 1986 (and, later, Bryan Singer's classy *Apt Pupil*). Darabont got permission to adapt *Rita Hayworth And The Shawshank Redemption*, shortening the title.
- Castle Rock, formed by *Stand By Me* alumni, agreed to make *TSR* with Reiner attached to direct. But Darabont had other ideas...

THE BROWN MILE
The 'sewage' pipe was filled with a mixture of chocolate, syrup, sawdust and water. A section of it can be viewed as part of a tour of the remaining prison buildings.

DIRTY PROTEST
The creek through which Andy cinematically splashes contained the run-off from local farmland. A chemist professed the water "absolutely lethal". Nobody told Robbins.





"No one knows what Shawshank is and redemption sounds religious... no one's gonna come and see that. Then you hear it's a prison movie. Great."

William Sadler, actor





"Stephen King writes deep, and with that story he was writing deeper than usual. All I had to do was not screw it up."

Frank Darabont, director





"Shawshank was one of the best things to happen to Andy. It forced him to reach for better parts of himself."

Morgan Freeman, actor

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION





"It seeped into the culture; it seeped into people's hearts. Word of mouth has now brought it to a place of esteem."

Frank Darabont, director

CARTOON VILLAIN
Stephen King berated Darabont because the tunnel Andy dug was "too round". He said it resembled something *Looney Tunes*' Wile E Coyote might have come up with.

STICK-UP JOB
How Andy stuck the poster back down after escaping has been the subject of intense speculation for the time-rich and socially-poor. "It's a movie cheat; live with it," says Darabont.

WILLING ACCOMPLICES
In the novella, Andy uses a poster of Rita Hayworth (in *Gilda*) to hide his tunnel; in the film he swaps Rita for Marilyn Monroe, then Raquel Welch, who was both flattered and impressed.

LAST-MINUTE REPRIEVE
Mansfield's Ohio State Reformatory had its demolition postponed to become Shawshank. Ex-inmates had vandalised the interiors until they looked like (Darabont's words) "an explosion in a confetti factory".

ESCAPE TO VICTORY
Andy's triumphal Christ-like pose was shot with a remote camera on a small crane. When the footage came back, every take was out of focus except the one used in the movie.





"This movie says that if you have patience, hope and persistence, then you can find your own Zihuatanejo, your own place in the sun."

Tim Robbins, actor

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS



IMAGE © MIRAMAX/EVERETT/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Ewan McGregor

The Trainspotting star on reprising Renton in the long-awaited sequel to the '90s defining Brit-flick

WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM

IN 1997 EWAN McGREGOR WAS THE HOTTEST THING IN BRITISH CINEMA, HIS ELECTRIFYING TURN AS HEROIN ADDICT RENTON IN *TRAINSPOTTING* INJECTING A STAID INDUSTRY WITH PURE ADRENALIN. Since then, he's conquered Hollywood, amassing 50-odd credits, but it hasn't dulled his enthusiasm for the job.

"I still love what I do," says the 45-year-old actor. "I still get a thrill reading a script and going, 'This is brilliant. I want to play this part'."

How could he not with the prospect of stepping back into Renton's scuffed trainers for Danny Boyle's long-awaited *Trainspotting* sequel on the horizon. Based on Irvine Welsh's book, *Porno*, all the main players are back to reprise their iconic characters – still partial to Class-A drugs but now dedicating much of their time to working in scuzzy skin flicks.

"The script is so good," McGregor says. "I have to say, I don't think any of us would have been keen to make a sequel to *Trainspotting* if it hadn't been a stellar script. If you make a bad sequel to a movie, it damages the credibility of the movie that you made 20 years ago. But John Hodge, who wrote the original film, and *Shallow Grave* and *A Life Less Ordinary* – he's just kicked it out the fucking park."

You exploded onto the scene with *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*. that was nearly a quarter of a century ago...

It doesn't feel like it. The '90s still feel like just a few years ago. And then you're like, "Oh my God, it's 20-plus years ago. Fucking hell! What the fuck!" But I'm so happy with the work I've done.

When did you last watch *Trainspotting*?

Not for a long, long time. But I will have to, of course. That's one of the funny aspects of [making *Porno*]. I mean, I'm approaching it having not lived in Scotland since I was 17. When we made *Trainspotting*, I was 23 or 24. I was closer to it. Now, I haven't lived there for a long, long time. There's been all kind of things happening, and there's been a referendum. The "it's shite being Scottish" speech that I do in *Trainspotting* was used in the referendum by the pro-independent people! I became a figurehead, unbeknownst to me. And here I am coming back to a role that's intrinsically Scottish. It's a slightly odd feeling. But at the same time, Renton has also been away for a long time, so there are all sorts of similarities. And I think that's what will make it really special, that sort of meta quality of the characters and the actors – our nostalgia for the '90s and what it meant.

Cool Britannia?

There's something very special about that time, and to have been part of it. The movie version of Britpop was *Trainspotting*. I have a real nostalgia for that. I hear 'Wonderwall' come on the radio, and I'm like, "Fucking take me back. I want to go back."

> **"The movie version of Britpop was *Trainspotting*. I have a real nostalgia for that"**

When you were shooting *Trainspotting*, did you feel as if you were making a film that would have cultural impact?

I think we did. I mean, we were so young, and so new. It was my fourth movie. I'd done *Shallow Grave*, and then I made a film with [Peter] Greenaway [*The Pillow Book*]. I think I did *Blue Juice* or something; I can't remember. Anyway, *Trainspotting* was my fourth movie. *Shallow Grave* had been massively well-received. It stood for something different. So when we came to do *Trainspotting*, I had all that expectation. I thought, "Yeah, we're going to fucking nail it." I could just feel it. To tackle a book about heroin addicts in Leith was probably as dangerous as you could imagine doing. And I loved it. I loved that spirit of, "Yeah, fuck it! Let's go!"

Does the 20-year gap since *Trainspotting* make the project more interesting?

Yeah. It's so funny, because I was talking about how unusual that was, and then I found myself previewing [directorial debut] *American Pastoral* at a cinema in Pasadena recently... We watched the film in the morning and then I had the whole afternoon, so I went to see the new *Star Wars* film. I realised I'd been telling everyone how unique it was to be making a sequel 20 years after the original, and now I was watching *Star Wars*, going, "Oh, maybe it's not quite as unique as I thought" [laughs].

You must be thrilled it's finally happening?

I have to say, the idea of being back on set with Jonny [Miller] and Bobby [Carlyle] and Ewen [Bremner] and Kelly [Macdonald]... I can't tell you how exciting that is. And also to be back on set with Danny. It's been such a long time since we worked together. And I've always sort of regretted that. For some reason or another, we didn't work together for all these years. He's one of the best directors I've ever worked with, and certainly when I think of my own work, he got some of the best work out of me that I've ever done. So I regret the movies that we didn't make together.

The prequels were not the *Star Wars* of our childhood. Looking back, do you consider the negative reactions to be fair?

I'm very happy with the ones I was in. George was trying to tell the earlier stories. He was trying to show that we can't have a familiarity about things that we haven't seen yet. When he's trying to create the Stormtroopers, he's also showing that they were originally an army of droids. Of course, when JJ Abrams was making his sequel, then you can have that familiarity because it's after the event. We can have the Millennium Falcon and we can have the Stormtroopers in a more advanced form. I'm very happy to be part of the legend of *Star Wars* and to have had the honour of trying to play Alec Guinness as a younger man.

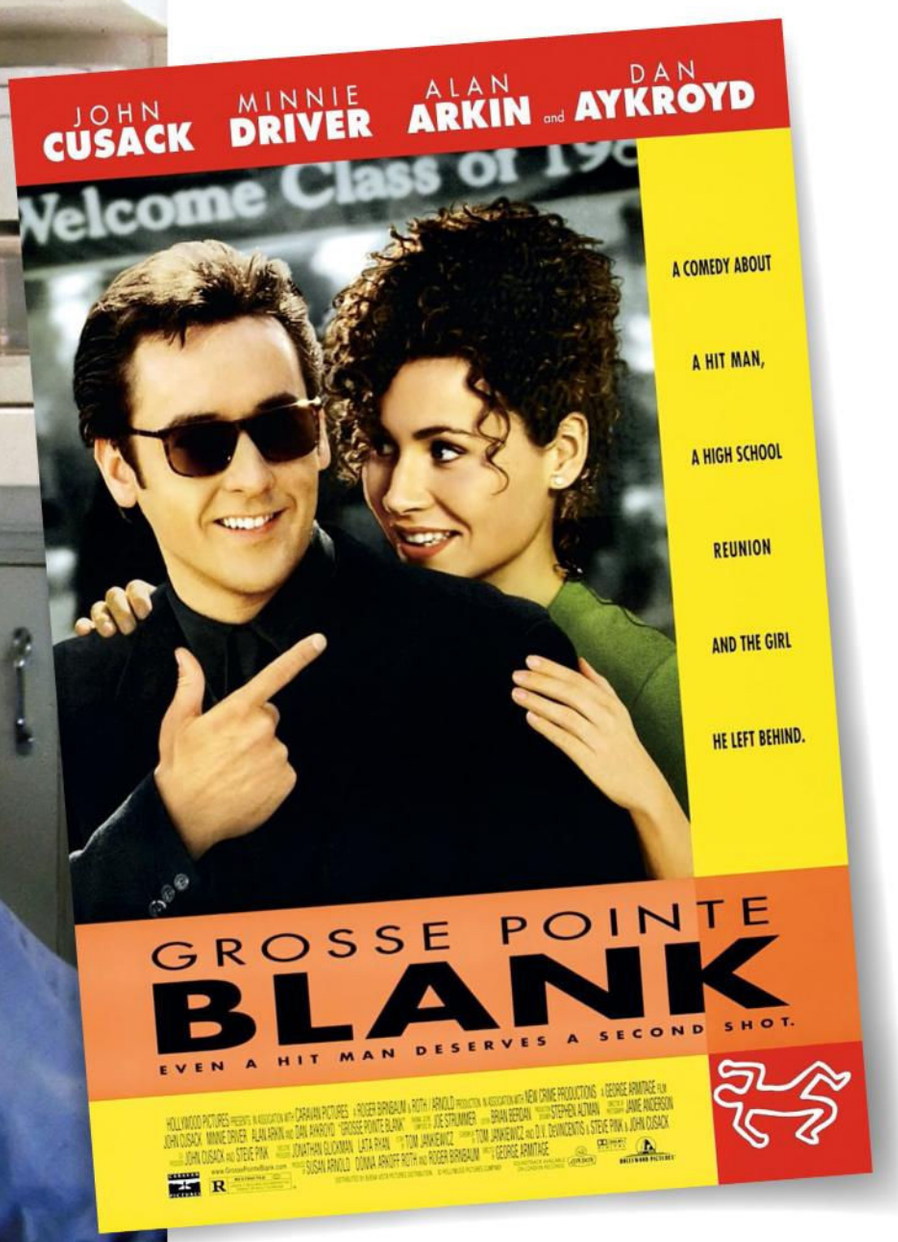


GROSSE POINTE BLANK

Clint and Quentin both love it and Total Film voted it the 21st greatest comedy of all time. But how did an assassin yarn with a confusing name, terrible poster and torturous back story become such a critical hit?

WORDS MATT GLASBY





Under fire: John Cusack and Dan Aykroyd battle it out; (right) the original poster.

Midway through the 1990s, crime films discovered the gift of the gab. *Pulp Fiction* groaned with pop-cultural longeurs; *The Usual Suspects* weaved an unpickable web of word associations and talky untruths. Then, in 1997, came an ensemble effort so garrulous, so overstuffed with asides, character insights and quirky quotability even the title had multiple meanings, referencing Grosse Pointe, an affluent Detroit suburb, Martin Blank (co-writer/exec producer/star John Cusack) – a hitman returning home for his high school reunion – and *Point Blank*, a no-nonsense Lee Marvin thriller. Forget Verbal Kint, this was verbal diahorrea – a minor miracle of fast-talking, on-the-fly filmmaking that ensured everyone, including director George Armitage (*Miami Blues*) and co-stars Dan Aykroyd (Grocer) and Minnie Driver (Debi Newberry), came up smelling of roses.

"We picked up this script by a guy named Tom Jankiewicz in treatment form," recalls Cusack. "The three of us, my producing partner [*Steve Pink*] and my writing partner [*DV DeVincentis*] sat around with two Apple PowerBooks trying to outdo each other." Armitage also threw his hat into the ring, albeit anonymously: "I wrote about eight passes in pre-production," he says. "I didn't take any credit because the Writers Guild is so strict I probably wouldn't have gotten it anyway, and I was afraid John or Tom or DV would lose out."

The director's loss would prove Cusack's gain. Says producer Roger Birnbaum, "There were scenes we were shooting that Johnny specifically, quote unquote, 'instructed' the director to shoot a certain way. He was all over this picture. *Grosse Pointe Blank*, I think, was something Johnny could really take ownership of." Armitage, unsurprisingly, disagrees. "I doubt Johnny would say that," he says, a touch abashed. "He was thrilled I let him do whatever he wanted."

Though actor/producers being allowed to do "whatever they want" has sunk many a project (see *Town And Country*), it's precisely because of this constructive, behind-the-scenes churn that *Grosse Pointe Blank* crackles with incident and intellect. At its centre is the ironically named →







Blank, "a spiritual gatecrasher who wants to figure out why his life doesn't have any meaning," according to Cusack. "His whole world's beginning to crumble, so basically you're watching Martin's end game." Offing a variety of ne'er-do-wells with weary *élan* (not to mention the odd Bond reference – an early poisoning attempt nodding to *You Only Live Twice* and Guns N' Roses contributing a fitting 'Live And Let Die'), Blank conceals a core of spiritual malaise with a whirlwind of verbosity, talking incessantly to the mirror and a shrink (Alan Arkin) to convince himself he was right to leave Debi (now, aptly, a talk radio DJ) behind. Even the climactic shootout is as much a war of words as of bullets, and though acquaintances both old and new keep telling Blank to slow down neither he, nor the film, ever does.

Indeed, so tight was the filming schedule, Armitage and co did all but half a day's filming in LA. Not that it made much difference. "[*Detroit-based* Jackie Brown *author*] Elmore Leonard thought the whole film was shot in Grosse Pointe," says the director. "The newspaper reported how nice we were, how we didn't block traffic – which would have been unusual; we were in a helicopter the whole afternoon."

"We didn't have many shooting days, we just had to fly through this thing," agrees Birnbaum. "I think the pace of it reflects the energy of the characters. They look like they, at any moment, could explode from the angst and violence going on inside them." They weren't the only ones. "My biggest memory of the 7-Eleven shootout [*in which Cusack faces rival Felix La PuBelle (Benny Urquidez)*] is that the place was wired to blow," says Armitage. "The explosives were being set up while we were filming, so it was a little nerve-wracking. The whole place could have gone up at any time. If you dwell on something like that it really amps up the drama." He still made time for some intertextual mischief, however. "I called Quentin Tarantino and said, 'Could I use your lobby card of the *Pulp Fiction* cast?' So we wired that with squibs too and shot it up!" He laughs. "It was a homage, a tip of the hat to Quentin." A mooted cameo from old Motor Mouth himself ("He wanted to be shot or blown up," recalls Armitage) never, thankfully, materialised.

Though it's tempting to draw parallels between Blank, the lone wolf, killing for blood money but yearning for fulfilment, and Cusack, Hollywood outsider, dabbling in popcorn movies to finance more personal projects, the former rejects human warmth for the cold certainty of gun metal and money, while the latter keeps his friends close. Very close. A short-lived post-wrap romance with Driver notwithstanding, Cusack's relationships with Piven, DeVincentis and Pink date back to their days in a Chicago youth theatre run by Piven's parents. Plus siblings Joan, Ann and Bill all crop up in the film, adding extra strands of depth and complexity to the already peppy performances. "Johnny likes being around his family and he likes being around talented people," explains Birnbaum.

"You want to create an atmosphere where actors can concentrate, where they feel like they can make mistakes," says Cusack. "All the stuff – all the trucks, all the lights, the cameras, all of it so you can capture a human moment on a screen – that's what everyone's here for. Get the fuck out of the way. Be quiet. But I don't say that in front of them. You try to create a little bit of a sacred space."

If the above sounds a little too Christian Bale for comfort, the cast were in their element. Well, most of them. "It was an extraordinary process – very civilised," says Armitage, whose son Brent was associate producer. "I was trying to tighten it up and streamline it, and John and the writers had all these wonderful ideas for dialogue and stuff. We would do the scripted version, then we

"WE DIDN'T HAVE MANY SHOOTING DAYS. WE FLEW THROUGH IT" ROGER BIRNBAUM



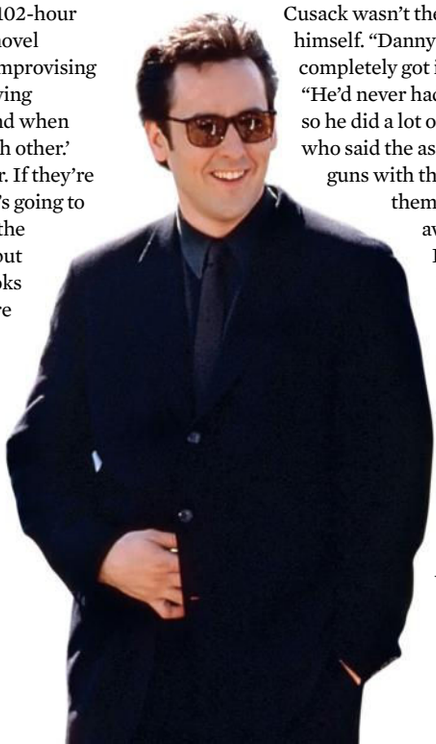


No prisoners: (left) Jeremy Piven plays old pal Paul Spericki; (above) Aykroyd as a rival assassin; (top right) Cusack sports a shiner.

would do a completely improvised version. I remember one actor saying, 'Oh, I never felt such pressure to improvise!' John went over and chewed him out."

In order to keep the spark of improvisation alive without producing "a 102-hour film", Armitage hit upon a novel solution. "If the actors are improvising you ask them, 'If you're moving around, just stop for a second when you start to riff and face each other.' Then you can cut it together. If they're moving you're in trouble. It's going to look jumpy, it's going to jar the audience out of the movie, but there's ways to do it so it looks like it's smooth. I mean there were a few things that bothered me, but nobody else noticed."

In among the maelstrom of witty asides and worrisome monologues, several moments of improvised magic stand out. When Blank strolls into Debi's radio booth unannounced after 10 years, she pulls him apart live on air, pausing only for an angry, longing kiss. "It was just wonderful, completely out of the blue," says Armitage. "You should have seen the smile on Johnny's face afterwards."



Cusack wasn't the only one enjoying himself. "Danny was menacing and he completely got into it," says Armitage. "He'd never had that type of role before, so he did a lot of research. He was the one who said the assassins will have like 10 guns with them and they'll keep firing them off, then throw them away and pull out two more. He had an absolute ball."

Not wishing to be left out of the gun-slinging, Driver requested some firearm action too. "I said OK, let's figure something out," says Armitage. "So when she's hiding in the bathtub during the final shootout, she fires off a round because she wanted to join the fun. Honestly, it's too bad you weren't there. It was an absolute joy, we were playing the whole time."

Though committed performances and Cusack's well-judged nepotism kept the relationships fizzing with real or imagined passion, *Grosse Pointe Blank*'s most memorable scenes are ones of imagined, or indeed, real conflict. "If you look at people, they're filled with good and bad; even the worst guy has instincts to be true, to seek redemption. I've seen a couple of bar fights and I've seen the regret flash into eyes right away," says Cusack.

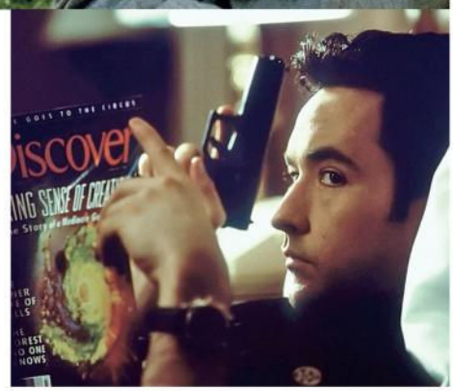
In the first, coked-up class bullyboy Bobby 'Beamer' (Michael Cudlitz) rubs up against Blank at the school reunion, but the face-off, like the film, sublimates into something much softer when Blank mollifies Bob into an impromptu poetry recital. Although an unlikely candidate on paper ("In high school I was like 98 pounds," says Cudlitz. "I was *tiny*, never did any drugs. I played trombone!"), the now fully grown *Band Of Brothers* actor was cast, he believes, because "John's a very big guy – I think it's 6ft 4in – and they felt they needed someone who, size-wise, could be potentially intimidating."

"The scene we shot with the poem was not the scene as written," remembers Cudlitz. "John said think of some other way that scene might go ahead and, after racking my brains, I presented a version where Bob, this big jock knucklehead, was in love with him all through high school and had penned a poem about it. John wrote part of the poem and I wrote part and we wound up improvising the scene from scratch. It was by far the most creative time I've ever had filmmaking. People still come up to me quoting Bobby 'Beamer' and say, 'Hey, do you wanna do some blow?'"

"The crux of that scene was that Blank was telling Bobby: 'I'm not your problem, I'm not who you hate' but he was talking to himself," explains Armitage. 'There's a genuine moment when Blank hugs him and it's sweet. The purpose of the movie was Blank reuniting with these people who thought he was an oddball before, and beginning to realise there was the possibility he could live another life." Another softer scene – in which Blank is stared out by a baby – found an →

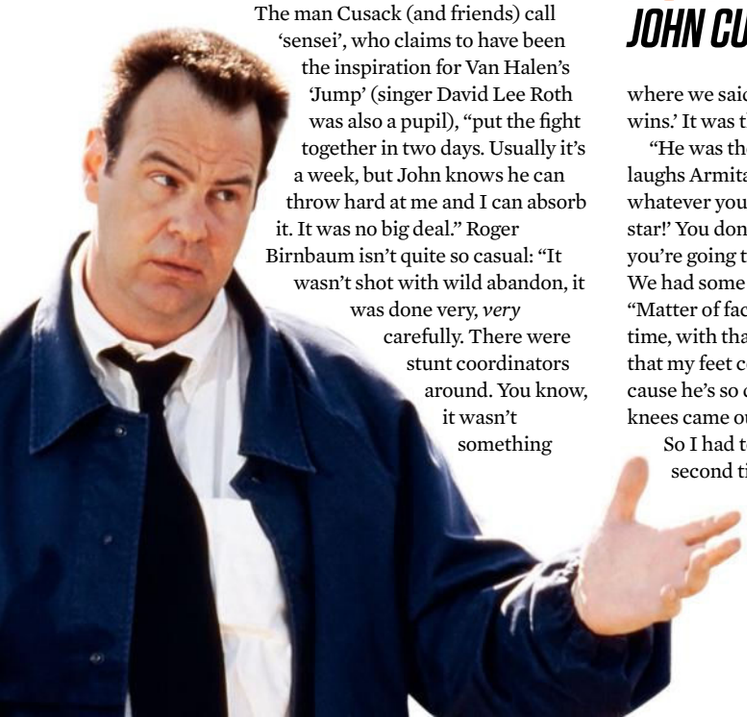


Undercover: (above) Cusack and Minnie Driver shoot a scene; (below) Cusack gets into a killer frame of mind.



unlikely fan in Clint Eastwood. "Johnny worked with him on *Midnight In The Garden Of Good And Evil*," recalls the director. "He said Clint loved the fight scene, but the scene where Blank and the baby exchange close-ups was so cute, he was on the floor with that!"

Ah yes, the fight scene. Set to a spiky track theme by The English Beat ('Mirror In The Bathroom', not the only self-referential music cue here, a banner reading 'The Future Is Unwritten' refers both to Blank and to composer Joe Strummer), the much-heralded tooth-and-claw death match between Blank and Lapoubelle erupts from nowhere but showcases decades of ass-kicking expertise in 60 seconds of vicious free-for-all. "John's been my student for 16 years, he mentioned my name in *Say Anything*," says Benny 'The Jet' Urquidez, a martial arts world champion. "He's an excellent kick-boxer. We still train together five times a week."



The man Cusack (and friends) call 'sensei', who claims to have been the inspiration for Van Halen's 'Jump' (singer David Lee Roth was also a pupil), "put the fight together in two days. Usually it's a week, but John knows he can throw hard at me and I can absorb it. It was no big deal." Roger Birnbaum isn't quite so casual: "It wasn't shot with wild abandon, it was done very, *very* carefully. There were stunt coordinators around. You know, it wasn't something

> **"YOU SHOULD GET INTO TROUBLE WITH NO EXIT STRATEGY"**
> **JOHN CUSACK**

where we said, 'Go on, go at it guys, best man wins.' It was thoroughly controlled."

"He was the world kickboxing champion!" laughs Armitage. "I said, 'Listen, Benny, do whatever you want to do, but please don't hit the star!' You don't want to break a nose because you're going to get shut down for a week or three. We had some close calls." They certainly did. "Matter of fact, John kicked me so hard the first time, with that sidekick going into the lockers, that my feet completely came off the ground cause he's so damn tall," laughs Urquidez. "My knees came out from under me and I went down. So I had to tell him where to kick me. The second time he kicked me so hard that my back hit the dial on the locker and I had the numbers drilled into my back."

"I like to take risks," explains Cusack. "With acting, you wanna see if you can get into trouble without knowing how you're gonna get out of it. It's like the exact opposite of war, where you need an exit strategy. When you're acting, you should get into trouble but with no exit strategy."

"We each got our bruises but such is life," says Urquidez. "I never broke a nose. I'm all about safety. I kick a cigarette right out of your mouth 10 out of 10, that's how good I am. I can go full blast and stop two inches in front of your face, so if I hit you it's because I meant to."

This ferocity of purpose transferred unforgettably to the screen, particularly at the fight's messy end, where Blank rams a ballpoint into his opponent's jugular – proof, if proof were needed, that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword. "Quentin Tarantino said it was probably the best fight scene he's ever seen, and I'm not sure of that, but it was certainly a beautiful job," says Armitage. "They wanted the reality of it, and I said, 'OK, well this is the reality of it, the fight don't end on the ground, it ends when it ends, and John took me right to that point'," says Urquidez. "I've died many ways onscreen, but I've never died with a pen in my throat before!" Armitage remembers it just as fondly: "I have that pen. A Mont Blanc. I still use it."

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

John Cusack Hit the target with whip-smart indies *Being John Malkovich* and *High Fidelity*, but was wide of the mark with *Grosse Pointe Blank*'s spiritual sequel *War Inc*, and confounding mainstream choices such as *2012*.

George Armitage Tried to repeat *GPB*'s multifaceted charm with Elmore Leonard adaptation *The Big Bounce* starring Owen Wilson and Morgan Freeman. "It was a very interesting process," he says. "Owen would improvise while Morgan stuck to the script." Unfortunately it bounced.

Minnie Driver Thanks to *Good Will Hunting* and *GPB*, 1997 proved a career high for Driver. She was last seen on US telly in *About A Boy* and movies you might not have heard of like *Beyond The Lights*, *Return To Zero* and *Stage Fright*.

Michael Cudlitz Continues to provide muscular support in the likes of *Southland* and *The Walking Dead*.

Benny 'The Jet' Urquidez Still teaches the art of war at the Lee Strasberg school and in many films. Check out bennythejet.com to join his LA gym or hear his thoughts on Haiti. Really.

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THE BIG LEBOWSKI

Take a glitzy trip through The Dude's subconscious...

Aside from *Star Wars*' Jedi census phenomenon, no movie can claim to have spawned a religion – apart from *The Big Lebowski*. In addition to annual Lebowski Fests, devotees have been able follow 'Dudeism' since The Church Of The Latter-Day Dude was formed in 2005 – not a bad legacy for a deadbeat from Venice Beach. But when the Coen Brothers first hurled free-spirited stoner Jeffrey 'The Dude' Lebowski (Jeff Bridges) into the midst of a noirish kidnap plot set against a backdrop of anachronistic Americana and the surreal, it's small wonder cinemagoers were as perplexed as the man himself.

As a follow-up to the Oscar-winning *Fargo* it was considered a flop at cinemas but established a fervent cult following on VHS and DVD, and is probably the Coens' most popular film – and El Duderino ("...if you're not into the whole brevity thing") is definitely their most beloved character. Nearly two decades on, The Dude continues to abide, and that's something we should all take comfort in. **Ali Upham**

***The Big Lebowski* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.**

SETTING THE SCENE

- The Dude is based on movie producer Jeff 'The Dude' Dowd. The Coens imagined the character in the context of a Raymond Chandler story.
- A lot of The Dude's wardrobe belonged to Jeff Bridges – including the jelly shoes.
- Before every scene, Bridges would ask if The Dude had "burned one". If the answer was yes, the actor would rub his eyes red, then do the take.
- Producer Joel Silver suggested The Dude should be reunited with his rug in the end but the Coens said no. Ethan later conceded it "would have been a nice resolution".
- The Coens job share – Joel is director, Ethan is producer; they use a pseudonym for their editing: Roderick Jaynes. 'Jaynes' was Oscar-nominated for *Fargo* and *No Country*.

EXPLICIT VISIT

"I love dancing, so it was a ball," said Bridges, who invited his wife and daughters to the set, only later realising they were watching him staring at lovely ladies' crotches.





"We wanted to do a big dance around the bowling alley with icons of bowling. Because the dream follows The Dude's encounter with the pornographer it seemed appropriate that it be a somewhat sexual dream as well."

Joel Coen, writer/director





"At some point, a PI gets slipped a Mickey Finn [*sedative*] and goes into a hallucination, so we had licence to do ['*Gutterballs*'] by virtue of the genre, and also licence to do it by virtue of the character being a heavy drug-user."

Ethan Coen, writer/producer

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON PICKERSGILL/ACUTE GRAPHICS





"I look up at this lady's... vagina, I guess you'd say, and there's this jungle of pubic hair coming out of her outfit. And the next one has an even bigger jungle, and they're all jungled out with tufts of hair. So they pulled one on the old Dude... But that was fun, I enjoyed it."

Jeff Bridges, actor

OF CORSET HURT
Julianne Moore's bronzed Valkyrie outfit was made from Styrofoam and leather and restricted her movements – to make matters worse, she was pregnant at the time.

HOOFER HOMAGE
The 'Gutterballs' sequence is inspired by Busby Berkeley's synchronised '30s routines; the bowling-pin headdress is a nod to Carmen Miranda's fruit-covered hats.

7-10 SPLIT
The shot of The Dude flying down the bowling lane is (obviously) a composite. Jeff Bridges had to be digitally shrunk to fit between the slender legs of the chorines.

UN-PLUCKY STRIKE
For when Bridges was lying underneath the girls, the dancers surprised him by stuffing their knickers with wigs, each girl getting progressively bushier...

DREAM WEAVERS
'Gutterballs' comprises elements from previous scenes, from Saddam Hussein's bowling-shoe cameo, to the giant scissors, the chequered floor and Maude's trident.

OLLIE DOLLY
For the bowling-ball POV shot, and other shots at the 'real-life' bowling alley, the Coens put a camera on a motorised skateboard capable of speeds of up to 20mph.





"A Valkyrie, Busby Berkeley, bowling: if you want to have dreams, those are the dreams to have."

John Goodman, actor





"When we're writing a script, usually, if we haven't had a 'Kafka break' [*surreal interlude*] by page 70, we start one there, arbitrarily."

Ethan Coen, writer/producer

POP QUIZ HOTSHOT

There's 15 questions on a page. Once you read the first question, the BOMB* is armed. If you get any wrong, it blows up. Whadda you do? WHADDA YA DO?

WORDS JORDAN FARLEY

1 Which pill does Neo choose in *The Matrix*?

2 What was the first film commercially released on DVD?

3 Fill in the missing word from the opening crawl of *The Phantom Menace*: "The _____ of trade routes to outlying star systems is in dispute."

4 Solve this anagram to reveal the secret identity of a famous superhero: Yawner Cube

5 If you heard the words "100% pure adrenaline", which movie would you be watching?

6 Who sung the *GoldenEye* theme?

7 In *Scream* the teens watch *Halloween*. But in which *Halloween* movie do the teens watch *Scream 2*?

8 Which of these is NOT a real *Batman & Robin* quote:

A. ***"You're on thin ice!"***

B. ***"What killed the dinosaurs? The ice age!"***

C. ***"Let's kick some ice"***

9 What year was Jennifer Lawrence born?



10 Hannibal Lecter claims to have eaten a census taker's liver with what in *The Silence Of The Lambs*?

11 How many f-bombs are there in *Four Weddings And A Funeral* (to the nearest 10)?

12 What type of dinosaur kills Dennis Nedry in *Jurassic Park*?

13 Chris Isaak's 'Wicked Game' featured on the *Wild At Heart* soundtrack, but in which David Lynch film did Isaak star?

14 What is the name of the convenience store Dante and Randall work at in *Clerks*?

15 Finish this *Truman Show* quote: "In case I don't see you _____."

ANSWERS

1. The red pill
2. *Twister*
3. Taxation
4. Bruce Wayne
5. *Point Break*
6. Tina Turner
7. *Halloween H20*
8. A
9. 1990
10. Fava beans and a nice chianti
11. 40 (actual number = 42)
12. Dilophosaurus
13. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*
14. The Quick Stop
15. Good afternoon, good evening and good night

*NOTE: THIS MAGAZINE IS NOT A BOMB. INTRODUCTION PURELY FOR DRAMATIC PURPOSES.

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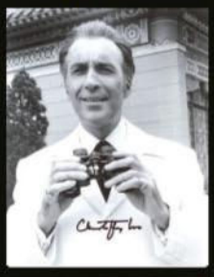
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